

"PRETTY POLLY PEMBERTON."

BY FANNIE HODGSON BURNETT.

CHAPTER I.

"PRETTY POLLY P."

"FRAMLEIGH," ventured little Popham. "You haven't spoken for half an hour, by Jupiter!"

Framleigh—Capt. Gaston Framleigh, of the Guards—did not move. He had been sitting for some time before the window, in a position more noticeable for ease than elegance, with his arms folded upon the back of his chair; and he did not disturb himself, when he condescended to reply to his youthful admirer and ally.

"Half an hour?" he said, with a tranquil, half drawl, which had a touch of affectation in its coolness, and yet was scarcely pronounced enough to be disagreeable, or even unpleasant. "Haven't I?"

"No, you have not," returned Popham, encouraged by the negative amiability of his manner. "I am sure it is half an hour. What's up?"

"Up?" still half abstractedly. "Nothing! Fact is, I believe I have been watching a girl!"

Little Popham sprang down, for he had been sitting on the table, and advanced toward the window, hurriedly, holding his cigar in his hand.

"I girl!" he exclaimed. "Where? What sort of a girl?"

"As to sort," returned Framleigh, "I don't know the species. A sort of girl I never saw before. But, if you wait, you may judge for yourself. She will soon be out there in the garden again. She has been darting in and out of the house for the last twenty minutes."

"Out of the house?" said Popham, eagerly. "Do you mean the house opposite?"

"Yes."

"By Jupiter!" employing his usual mild expletive, "look here, old fellow, had she a white dress on, and geranium-colored bows, and——"

"Yes," said Framleigh. "And she is rather tall for such a girl; and her hair is cut, on her round white forehead, Sir Peter Lely fashion, (they call it banging, I believe,) and she gives you the impression, at first, of being all eyes, great dark eyes, with——"

"Long, curly, black lashes," interpolated Popham, with enthusiasm. "By Jupiter! I thought so! Its pretty Polly P."

He was so evidently excited, that Framleigh looked up with a touch of interest, though he was scarcely a man of enthusiasm himself.

"Pretty Polly P.!" he repeated. "Rather familiar mode of speech, isn't it? Who is pretty Polly P.?"

Popham, a good-natured, sensitive little fellow, actually colored.

"Well," he admitted, somewhat confusedly, "I dare say it does sound rather odd, to people who don't know her; but I can assure you, Framleigh, though it is the name all our fellows seem to give her with one accord, I am sure there is not one of them who means it to appear disrespectful, or—or even cheeky," resorting, in desperation, to slang. "She is not the sort of girl a fellow would ever be disrespectful to, even though she is such a girl—so jolly and innocent. For my part, you know, I'd face a good deal, and give up a good deal, any day, for pretty Polly P.; and I'm only one of a many."

Framleigh half smiled, and then looked out of the window again, in the direction of the house opposite.

"Daresay," he commented, placidly. "And very laudably, too. But you have not told me what the letter P. is intended to signify. 'Pretty Polly P.' is agreeable and alliterative, but indefinite. It might mean Pretty Polly Popham."

"I wish it did, by Jupiter!" cordially, and with more color; "but it does not. It means Pemberton!"

"Pemberton!" echoed Framleigh, with an intonation almost savoring of disgust. "You don't mean to say she is that Irish fellow's daughter?"

"She is his niece," was the answer, "and that amounts to the same thing, in her case. She has lived with old Pemberton ever since she was four years old, and she is as fond of him as if he was a woman, and her mother; and he is as fond of her as if she was his daughter; but he couldn't help that. Every one is fond of her."

"Ah!" said Framleigh. "I see. As you say, 'She is the sort of girl.'"

"There she is, again!" exclaimed Popham, suddenly.

And there she was, surely enough, and they had a full view of her, geranium-colored bows and all. She seemed to be a trifle partial to those geranium-colored bows. Not too partial, however, for they were very nicely put on. Here and there, down the front of her white morning dress, one prettily adjusted on the side of her

hair, one on each trim, slim, black kid slipper. If they were a weakness of hers, they were by no means an inartistic one. And as she came down the garden-walk, with a little flower-pot in her hands—a little earthen-pot, with some fresh gloss-leaved little plant in it—she was pleasant to look at, pretty Polly P.—very pleasant; and Gaston Framleigh was conscious of the fact.

It was only a small place, the house opposite, and the garden was the tiniest of gardens, being only a few yards of ground, surrounded by iron railings. Indeed, it might have presented anything but an attractive appearance, had pretty Polly P. not so crowded it with bright bloom. Its miniature-beds were full of brilliantly-colored flowers, blue-eyed lobelia, mignonette, scarlet geraniums, a thrifty rose or so, and numerous nasturtiums, with ferns, and much pleasant, humble greenery. There were narrow boxes of flowers upon every window-ledge, a woodbine climbed round the door, and, altogether, it was a very different place from what it might have been, under different circumstances.

And, down the graveled path, in the midst of all this flowery brightness, came Polly, with her plant to set out, looking not unlike a flower herself. She was very busy, in a few minutes, and she went about her work almost like an artist, flourishing her little trowel, digging a nest for her plant, and touching it, when she transplanted it, as tenderly as if it had been a day-old baby. She was so earnest about it, that, before very long, Framleigh was rather startled by hearing her begin to whistle, softly to herself, and, seeing that the sound had grated upon him, Popham colored and laughed half-apologetically.

"It is a habit of hers," he said. "She hardly knows when she does it. She often does things other girls would think strange. But she is not like other girls."

Framleigh made no reply. He remained silent, and simply looked at the girl. He was not in the most communicative of moods, this morning; he was feeling gloomy and depressed, and not a little irritable, as he did, now and then. He had good reason, he thought, to give way to these fits of gloom, occasionally; they were not so much an unamiable habit as his enemies fancied; he had some ground for them, though he was not prone to enter into particulars concerning it. Certainly he never made innocent little Popham, "Lambkin Popham," as one of his fellow-officers had called him, in a brilliant moment, his confidante. He liked the simple, affectionate little fellow, and found his admiration soothing; but the time had not yet arrived, when the scales not yet having fallen from his eyes, he could read

such guileless, almost insignificant problems as "Lambkin" Popham clearly.

So his companion, only dimly recognizing the outward element of his mood, thought it signified a distaste for that soft, scarcely unfeminine, little piping of pretty Polly's, and felt bound to speak a few words in her favor.

"She is not a masculine sort of girl, at all, Framleigh," he said. "You would be sure to like her. The company fairly idolize her."

"Company!" echoed Framleigh. "What company?"

"Old Buxton's company," was the reply. "The theatrical lot at the Prince's, you know, where she acts."

Framleigh had been bending forward, to watch Polly patting the mould daintily, as she bent over her flower-bed; but he drew back at this, conscious of experiencing a shock, far stronger and more disagreeable than the whistling had caused him to feel.

"An actress!" he exclaimed, in an annoyed tone.

"Yes, and she works hard enough, too, to support herself, and help old Pemberton," gravely.

"The worse for her," with impatience. "And the greater rascal old Pemberton, for allowing it."

It was just at this moment that Polly looked up. She raised her eyes carelessly to their window, and doing so, caught sight of them both. Young Popham blushed gloriously, after his usual sensitive fashion, and she recognized him at once. She did not blush at all, herself, however; she just gave him an arch little nod, and a delightful smile, which showed her pretty, white teeth, and then she went so far as to hold up for his inspection her hands, displaying to him the earth-stains the gardening operations had left.

"Let us—let us go across to her," burst forth little Popham. "I will introduce you, and——"

Framleigh opened his eyes,

"Let us!" he repeated. "By George! You don't stand on ceremony, it seems, with your little Polly P., if that is your style."

"She doesn't care about ceremony. You know, I told you, she was not like other girls. It isn't her way to be ceremonious," explained her champion.

"I should judge not," from Framleigh, dryly; and then his eye caught once more by the geranium-colored bows, he relented suddenly. "If it is allowable," he added, "let us go, by all means. She is a pretty creature."

It was only that outward charm he thought of as he spoke, and of that only he thought, as he followed his companion down stairs. Only because she was a "pretty creature," and because

his mood was a dull one, he cared to speak to the girl. If the truth must be confessed, he was making the great blunder of rather superciliously classing her with a dozen or so other pretty actresses he had met. He had known many in his day, particularly in his budding youth, and his recollections of them, of the pink and pearl powdered Celestines, and Maries, and Leyettes, were not always of the pleasantest description. She might be a wise little girl enough, this pretty Polly P. Certainly she was wise enough to study through a window, but he scarcely cared to form her acquaintance.

Still he found himself following Popham down the stairs, and across the street; and the next thing, there he stood, on the narrow gravel-path, between the over-running borders of blue, deep, deep-blue lobelias; and Polly was looking straight into his eyes. It was a way of hers, to look very straight into a man's eyes, when she talked to him, and she looked very straight at Framleigh. Truth to tell, she was taking stock of him, somewhat severely. As to Framleigh himself, he was conscious of appearing rather inane and foolish. He had nothing to say, and in a very few minutes began to anathematize Popham inwardly, for bringing him into the scrape.

"Your flowers seem to thrive wonderfully," he hazarded, as an original remark.

"My flowers always do," she answered. "I suppose it is because I am so fond of them."

"One may be sure of that," he returned, making a languid effort at tacking together such a gallant speech as would have pleased Marie or Celestine. "Their thriving would be a natural consequence of your being fond of them, of course."

If she had simpered, or blushed, it would have been just what he had expected; but she did neither; she opened her immense, densely-dark, gray eyes, gave her shoulders a little shrug, and laughed at him, "at," not "with" him, be it remarked, though her laugh was by no means ill-natured. But though she made no other comment, that one moment showed Framleigh his blunder, and proved to him that he had, by his own act, given this sharp, unrefined young woman the upper hand. She walked up the short path with them, stopping every step or so to tie up a plant, or clear away a dead leaf, and it was toward Popham all her small efforts to please were directed. And her mode of entertaining him had a sort of originality in it. It would have been amusing to a man, in an amiable mood, to hear her odd talk. Her bits of gossip about theatres and theatre people; her straightforward enjoyment of theatrical jokes; her unconscious tendency to innocent slang, was a racy enough

combination, even if a trifle startling, at times, to people unused to the style.

"We are rehearsing a new piece, Mr. Popham," she said. "Something about a lot of French and German students. I am a grisette, with a horrible old mother, and there's a wicked marquis in it, who drugs me, and tries to run away with me; but Franz stops him. Franz is my lover, you know, with big, yellow mustaches, and long hair, and a big pipe. I am Desirie, and Josie Benson is Angelique; in fact, there are a lot of us; and we have a party at the room of Franz and Victor; and we dance and drink toasts, and I sing 'Vive l' Militaire,' because there is a little lieutenant there, and I want to make Franz jealous. Montmorenci is making my dresses now. Come into the house and see them."

Wondering who Montmorenci was, Framleigh obeyed Miss Polly's "This way, if you please," by following her into the parlor, a small, bright, square room, with much pretty, inexpensive adornment about it. "Montmorenci" was sewing at the window, and proved to be Polly's duenna, costumer, and commander-in-chief; and her rich Milesian accent was rather a grotesque accompaniment to her noble name. Truth to tell, report had whispered that "Montmorenci" was merely a result of the good taste of a manager, who, in Madame's theatrical days, had preferred that name to the less striking one of O'Whiffiker.

"'An' is it wan of Mister Popham's frinds ye are?" commented the lady. "On me sowl, then, I'm glad to say yez; fur it's Popham that's a good young man, an' a throe frind to Polly there, ever since she was a slip of a gurl, playin' in the Fairy Cave, at the pantomime."

Framleigh bowed with a grave air, as he seated himself.

"When a man finds himself among such people," he was saying to himself, ill-humoredly, "he may as well resign himself to it as calmly as possible; but I wish I had stayed where I was, confound it!"

Yet, notwithstanding his irritated feeling—a feeling brought about, I may add, more by that consciousness that he had blundered, than by anything else, though he would not have confessed it—he watched Polly, in spite of himself. There was no denying that the girl was ten times handsomer than he had given her credit for, at the first glance. She was taller than he had thought her, or looked taller in the little room: her figure was more perfect; the manner in which her head was set upon her shoulders was actually faultless; the round, white forehead, shadowed by that picturesque, quaint fringe of hair, so few women can effect without looking fast, was with-

out fault too; and her eyes. Oh! her eyes, so mellow, so large-irised, so changeable. Those great eyes themselves were a stage property, and without a single other attraction, would have been worth so much per week.

"I wonder if she languishes at the men in the boxes with them," thought Framleigh. But, mind you, he would not have made such a cowardly, mental comment, if he had been in a respectable frame of mind.

But little recked Polly, whether his opinions were flattering, or otherwise, just or unjust. She was amusing herself and Popham, rattling on at a fine rate about this new piece of old Buxton's. She seemed quite to enjoy the thought of taking part in it. She was not a star among her fellow-artistes, never had been, and never would be, though her pretty face and charming good-nature made her such a favorite; but if she was not a star, certainly she enjoyed her part of the work far more than if she had been the adored object of the people's most feverish admiration. All her parts were simple ones, calculated to show her picturesque, innocent beauty and naive vivacity; and even old stagers who knew, and had known from the first, that Mademoiselle Pauline (see play bills) would never make a Siddons, were pleasantly impressed, and were quite enraptured with her bright way of filling her little parts, and singing her artless songs. And what a favorite she was with the Montmorenci. How the good soul fell in with her moods, and laughed at her jokes, and delighted in her triumphs; for, if her theatrical triumphs were small, Polly had triumphs of another class, not to be slighted. Was not old Buxton himself ready to marry her off hand, and make her manageress of the Prince's, at any moment? Did not that aristocratic old sinner, Lord Cairngorm, throw her bouquets, night after night, and had he not once even sent her a diamond bracelet, which Miss Polly, to her credit be it spoken, had packed back to him, per bearer, with a message that ought to have extinguished him, if it did not? Did not half-a-dozen "heavy swells" congregate in the green-room, after the evening's performance was over, just with the hope of gaining a few words with her; and had not the whole —th regiment, stationed at Banmulloch, fallen in love with her, in a body? And all this the Montmorenci confided to their visitor, in a triumphant aside, while Polly was chatting with Popham.

"An' it's few gurls of her age, but would have their heads turned off their shoulders wid the flattery of the men; fur, sure enough, some of them makes great fools of themselves. But, Polly, faith, it's Polly knows how to be winnin',

an' smooth-tongued, and light-hearted as a burd, an' yet kape thim at arms-length."

And so passed the time. Polly filling the soul of her young adorer with ecstasy with her good spirits; the Montmorenci rambling on in the best of humors; Framleigh professing to listen, but alternately criticizing Polly, and finding himself mentally entangled by her fresh face, and radiant eyes. He was glad when Popham, after an ardent struggle, summoned up resolution to rise from his chair, to make his adieus. He was glad it was over.

But if Framleigh was not sorry to leave this dubious field, he left it with polite dignity, at least. He bowed his straight six feet of height suavely before the placid Montmorenci, and the grisette's cap she was making; he bent low before Polly, and replied by polite equivocation to her faint hope that they might see him again; and he stood uncovered on the path before the door, while Popham lingered on the threshold.

"If you will only let me send you some roots and things, you know, Miss Pemberton," he heard Popham say, "I will go to Pruner's to-day, and pick out the best he has, and—and I shall be delighted. I should like," almost pathetically, "to see something I had given you, grow in your garden, and to know you took care of it."

But, though he heard this, Framleigh had not heard what Polly had said to her friend, in the hall, when his own back was turned.

"I say, Teddy," she had observed, with the usual admixture of naiveté and slang phrase, "your friend is an awful swell, isn't it? He is a bigger swell than Cairngorm or Delaplayne, any day. Never mind bringing him again. I don't like him."

CHAPTER II.

"MRS. POMPHREY'S 'EVENING.'"

BUT when she said this, Polly knew nothing of that "evening" of Mrs. Pomphrey's. And, for the matter of that, how could she know anything about it? She had never been called upon to assist at one of the Pomphrey "evenings" before, and accordingly did not anticipate that pleasure. But it came, nevertheless. Mrs. Pomphrey was young, Mrs. Pomphrey was fair, Mrs. Pomphrey's pet insanity was a tendency to break out into amateur theatricals. At Christmas-tide, this tendency usually evinced itself most strongly, and it was at Christmas-tide that Polly found herself drawn, somehow or other into her service. A young lady, who had promised to enact the part of a certain attractive little Marquise, in a certain little comedy, had proved herself incapable, and, rather to the relief of her fellow-

amateurs, it must be confessed, had thrown up her part. Mrs. Pomphrey was in despair. Only a week left, and nobody, positively nobody, to rely upon! Did not somebody know somebody? Did not anybody know anybody? She almost tore her charmingly-dressed hair. And then, one of the more youthful amateurs, who had seen Desirée, and had, of course, been desperately enamored of that harmless young syren, ventured to speak up in her behalf.

"I—ah—think—ah—I know some one who would do," he said, making a transparent effort not to look eager. "There's—ah—a girl at old Buxton's—the Prince's, you know, who does such things well. Pemberton, her name is. Perhaps you could engage her for the part."

"Pretty Polly P.!" exclaimed a languid, elderly dandy. "By Jove, yes! Let us have her, by all means. Pretty Polly P. will carry us through, without a blunder."

Mrs. Pomphrey took out her tablets and a pencil, with an air of resolution.

"What is her address?" she demanded. "Where shall I find her? I will put it down, now, and call on her this afternoon."

And she did call on Polly, and, finding Polly at home, by dint of some seductive argument, persuaded Polly to promise to take the part.

Thus, on this eventful "evening," Polly found herself figuring upon the small, elaborate stage, and appearing before the rose-coloured, silk curtains, to receive additional applause from an enthusiastic audience, which had fallen in love with her pretty, innocent face and lovely figure at first sight.

But it is not with this part of Mrs. Pomphrey's "evening" we have to do; it is with what occurred after the acting was over, and people, both audience and actors, were mingling on level ground, flirting, flattering, dancing, jesting, and scandalizing. Then, I am obliged to say, Polly's occupation has gone. On the stage, the participants in the pleasures of Mrs. Pomphrey's "evening" had admired her; but off the stage, what could they do with her? She was not of themselves, she belonged to a different class of beings; human beings, it is true, but still human beings with whom they had nothing quite in common. She was a very handsome young person, they all saw. But were not handsome young persons in that grade of life often rather dubious young persons? They did not mean to be ill-natured, at least all of them did not, but was it not rather awkward for them? Perhaps this poor little raven among doves ought not to have stayed; but you see she did not know enough for this.

It was her first experience of the feminine

side of high life, and she had thought it quite probable that she should enjoy the after-ball, and the fine people, and the fine supper, as much as she had enjoyed Angelique's supper, and the little dance they had had after it.

But, alas! her eyes were soon opened. There she sat, in her picturesque stage-grandeur, of blue and silver brocade, with the powder on her hair, and the great paste buckles on her high-heeled blue and silver shoes, for they were to wear their costumes all the evening. Mrs. Pomphrey's was becoming to her, which, perhaps, was the reason. In half an hour Polly had found out, being as sharp as she was pretty, that she had nothing to do with these grand people, and they had less to do with her. Even the gentlemen had, for the time, deserted her, somewhat against their wills, it must be admitted, but they could not help themselves. Their sisters, and mammas, and young lady-friends, had taken them in tow, and kept a sharp eye upon them, a keen, priety-suggesting eye. Dance with the youngest Miss McIntosh, Charles, love," said mamma, to her eldest hope, seeing him cast a longing eye at that dangerous Polly. "Go, and rescue Clara Thorbury from that horrid Lethered," coaxes Edward's artful sister. And to Beverly the Dashing, who, during the performance, remarked that Polly was "stunning," pretty little Miss Penstock says, artlessly, "What a dreadful thing it is, you know, that such a lovely creature should have to live such a horrid, demoralizing life, and lose all her freshness through paint and things. I wonder if she would look faded now, if that rouge was washed off. I have heard Francis say that they do fade and get sallow even when they are quite young."

Rouge indeed! The time had not come yet when Polly needed rouge. The fresh young tints of red and white would have set at defiance any "pink saucer" extant; and Miss Penstock knew this too; but at the same time there was a little consolation in suggesting that it might be rouge. And Polly sat in her finery, trying to be amused, but, at the same time, wishing herself at home: wishing she had left herself a loop-hole for early escape, instead of believing her hostess' neat, diplomatic speeches, and relying on them so far as not to order her modest cab until half-past twelve. She opened and shut her silver-flowered, blue, satin fan, and looked about her, as the only way of whiling away the time.

"Swells off the stage are enough like swells on it," she said to herself. "That old woman, in velvet and point lace, reminds me of the Duchess in 'May-fair'; and I am sure the tall, fair girl she is talking to, might be Pauline Des-

chappelles. Yes, and there is Madame! And there are Romeo and Juliet, and that uncomfortable-looking woman, in black velvet, might be Hamlet in disguise. And there—— Why, there is that friend of Teddy Popham's, and he is coming this way!"

She had not seen anything of Framleigh since that summer morning, when Popham had brought him across to her little garden; and she had not been sorry. Teddy had taken her hint, and had not brought Framleigh again; and the truth was, she had quite forgotten his very existence, until he "turned up," as she put it, in this very way. And he? Well, he had not forgotten her quite so completely, because Teddy Popham would not let him. He had heard from Teddy of her successes at the theatres, and of her charms, and of her brilliance; but he had not thought of her, on his own account. He had not even been to the Prince's to see Desirée. But he was in a better humor now, than he had been when he met her first. He was in a better humor, because he was in better spirits. He was beginning to hope that he had some prospect of tiding safely over the troubles that had made him moody and unamiable then; and, as a consequence, he was more open to impression, to being impressed pleasantly by this pretty sight of Polly, attired as a Marquise in blue and silver brocade, with dazzling buckles on her dainty shoes, with powder on her hair, with that carnation color on her cheeks, with that fine glow in her immense changeable eyes. He was so pleasantly impressed, that he made up his mind to stop and speak to her. What color were those immense eyes? He thought they were a sort of warm, yellow-brown, when Polly raised them to his face, as he addressed her.

"Miss Pemberton, I believe," he said.

"Yes," answered Polly, quietly. "Miss Pemberton."

"I wish he had forgotten," she was saying to herself.

But there was no help for it. He had made up his mind to talk to her a little, and there was no preventing him, without being ruder and more ungracious, than it was in Polly Pemberton's sweet-tempered nature to be toward even her worst enemy, if she had one. So she permitted him to seat himself at her side, to open a quiet little conversation, to inquire about her flowers, to pretend to be interested in the bodily health of Montmorenci; in fact, to make himself extremely agreeable. After listening a while, she began to be rather entertained too. He could be entertaining, if he chose, mark you this—Capt. Framleigh. His style was a somewhat quiet and languid one, but it was a good style, and a polished

one. His low, half-confidential tone was pleasant too, and his tendency to satirize the good people about them made her laugh. Those large and rather indolent-looking blue eyes of his were a taking feature, and after her attention had been attracted by them, Polly thought them as fine as he was thinking her own chameleon orbs.

"Were you enjoying yourself, when I came in?" he asked, letting these lazy blue eyes rest upon her face.

"No," answered Polly, fearlessly. "I wasn't. I don't know any one here, and no one knows me, and what is more, no one wants to know me; and I don't like to sit still, while everybody else is dancing."

"Then you are fond of dancing?"

"Yes. And I am used to it."

An idea presented itself to his mind, suddenly. He had not thought of such a thing before; in fact, he was not fond of dancing, but it just occurred to him that he would like to try the seductive waltz the musicians were beginning with pretty Polly P. Why not? And he was in the mood to assert himself before society a little to-night. He did not pause to put his request into very ceremonious form.

"Will you dance with me?" he said, briefly.

Polly smiled.

"It will be better than sitting still," her frankness getting the better of her. "And that is a lovely waltz they are playing now. Yes, I will dance."

People stared at them when he led her out upon the floor, and put a firm, light arm about her lovely, pliant waist. Could it be possible that this was Gaston Framleigh, whose very pride and exclusiveness made him anything but a favorite? The women looked grave, and the men a trifle envious, but it was Framleigh of the Guards, after all. And he was waltzing round the room with those long, easy strides, and that cool, untranslatable air, Polly floating with him as lightly as a thistle-down. Polly never noticed the grave faces; she cared very little about the matter; she enjoyed the music, and her partner's good time and step; but she would just as readily have waltzed with Teddy Popham. Capt. Framleigh had not "impressed" her yet, even if she was beginning to relent toward him, and decide that, "swell" as he was, he was more agreeable than she had given him credit for at first. She had seen too many men to be susceptible.

"Do you know everybody in the room?" she asked him, as they went round.

"I know nobody," he answered. "I dare say I have met most of these people before, and I know most of their names, and nearly all of their

faces; but as to knowing them— Stay, I think I see a young lady there— But, no! I don't know even Diana Dalrymple, and we have been on decently friendly terms for ten years."

"Which is Diana Dalrymple?" Polly asked, thinking how well the name would look on a play-bill, and rather envying the girl who had been born to it.

"We shall pass her in a moment or so. A tall blonde, waltzing toward us, with a man in uniform. She wears pink brocade and pearls."

When this young lady passed them, Polly cast a rapid glance over her, ran her over after the manner of women, with a swiftly-comprehending eye. A beauty, a magnificent, cold, white creature, with finely-cut, delicate face, and down-dropped eyelids, and with a great, graceful rustle of that rich and exquisite brocade following in her wake, and yet never seeming to get in her way, or trouble her in the least.

"Her name suits her," said Polly.

"I have thought so, often," he replied.

"She must have been very young, when you knew her first!" she hinted.

"Ten years old," answered the captain, his eyes following the pink brocade train, and marble-white shoulders. "She is my cousin."

They passed each other twice or thrice before they ended their waltz; but Miss Dalrymple did not raise the down-dropped fringes of her handsome eyes. When Gaston chose, she said to herself, he was at liberty to leave his partner, and come to make his bow to herself; but until then—

What would you have? Certainly, it could not be expected of her, that she should recognize the existence of a dubious young person, who had been brought before them for their entertainment. She could not see Gaston, without seeing Polly; and Polly she would not see, or rather she would not observe that she was dancing with her cousin, the handsomest, the most unimpeachable man in the room. So she saw neither of them.

Polly knew all this, too. Had she not seen it at once, with those sharp eyes of hers? And yet, would you believe it, she did not pause the sooner for it, or care very much. She was used to it, perhaps.

But at length she brought her dance to an end. "I will sit down, if you please," she said to her partner; and so was led to her seat, and handed to it, with a low bow.

She had little chance to sit again, until the cab came, however. The ice being broken, partners came in rapid succession; they quite flocked about her chair, in fact, and besieged her, despite the decorum-suggesting glances of virtuous

mammams and modest daughters. Her little programme was handed about, and name after name went down, until it was full, yes, up to that last dance, which would end somewhere about half-past twelve.

"I am like Cinderella," she said, in that cool, undisturbed way of hers, to Gaston Framleigh. "When the clock strikes twelve, the spell will be broken; the blue and silver will turn to sober gray; and I shall leave the glass slippers behind me. What a pity there is no prince to pick them up, and send a courier after me. If you should hear of one making inquiries, just send him to the Prince's. I shall be playing 'Madelon,' there, to-morrow night; and he won't have any trouble in finding me."

She had the best of it, after all, if the just and upright matrons did gather their innocent broods about them, and look askant at her. She danced her fill, and was made much of, and when she made her modest curtesy to the audience, her exit had its *eclat*. And Gaston Framleigh, who was bending over Diana Dalrymple's chair, and talking to her, in that low, half-confidential tone, followed Polly with his glance until she was out of the room, and had passed down the hall on her escort's arm. He felt lazily attracted, and would not have been sorry to follow her in person—more for variety's sake than anything else, perhaps. There was not very much variety in Diana's high-bred repose of manner, and sometimes, just now and then—shall we confess the heresy—he was a little bored by its suggestion of sameness.

"Is it that girl you are thinking of, Gaston?" said the young lady, not deigning to appear disturbed in her placid hauteur. "You are certainly not listening to me. But don't exert yourself to make any effort, I beg. I can wait until you are at liberty."

CHAPTER III.

"BY DEGREES."

OF course, you will be very much surprised to hear that, after this, Gaston Framleigh and pretty Polly met often enough. Else why did I introduce them to each other, and why did I bring them together, at Mrs. Pomphrey's chaste entertainment? Of course, the wiseacres know very well that a writer of love-stories does not bring two people together, without some deep-laid plan in prospect. You know, at once, when Aurelia drops her fan at Mrs. Cingmar's reception, and Augustus picks it up, and hands it to her, and their eyes meet, you know at once that I mean to carry Aurelia and Augustus through two volumes of agony, and unite them in the twirl.

So, if you are in the habit of wasting your time upon love-stories, you know, in an instant when, in the first chapter, Capt. Gaston Framleigh announced that he was watching a young person in a garden, that the young person in question did not come into that garden without its being intended that she should suffer and sigh, laugh and be happy for your benefit and Capt. Gaston's, before I dropped my curtain upon my little stage, and turned my footlights out.

There were half-a-dozen places where Gaston Framleigh met pretty Polly. He met her in the street, going out to do her modest shopping; he met her going to rehearsal, and coming home; he met her, sometimes, going to the theatre, at night, under Montmorenci's guardianship, that good soul helping her to carry her little wardrobe, and, not unfrequently, he saw her at her own house. He could hardly have told you how it happened, that he began to find himself in the small, square parlor so often. He remembered the cause of his first few visits, it is true, but that was all. He had found himself dull and tired in his own room, on one or two occasions, and the nearness of the house opposite had suggested Polly to his wandering mind. And, after the first few times, it became a sort of habit. Popham was quite surprised to find Framleigh there so often, and, indeed, might have been alarmed, had Polly's manner toward him not been exactly what it was. She certainly showed Framleigh no special favor. In the beginning of their acquaintance, she was not nearly so fond of him as she was of Popham himself. She treated him just as she treated Delaplayne, and Despard, and Burroughs, and a dozen others. And, perhaps, it was this very indifference of her, which drew Framleigh on to some slight indiscretions. If she had valued his attentions more, his fastidiousness might have taken the alarm; but, as it was, he felt perfectly safe.

"He is not exactly a favorite of mine," said Polly, to Popham. "And I don't exactly see why he comes; but he does come, and so it rests there."

"He is a queer fellow," remarked Teddy, reflecting. "But, he is awfully clever, you know, Miss Polly, and all that sort of thing."

Polly, stitching busily upon a smart, little piece of costuming, to be worn upon the stage, began to carol softly the tag-end of the children's song,

"Of all the king's knights, 'tis the flower
Always gay."

"I should like to know what is the matter with him, sometimes," she said, ending her little carol abruptly. "He is stupid enough. He looks

as if he had something on his mind. He reminds me, in some of his moods, of one of those villains in tragedies, who confess to a murder in the last act, and stab themselves just before the curtain goes down."

"He is a little gloomy, now and then," acknowledged Popham.

"Well, he is a particular friend of yours," said Polly, succinctly. "So you ought to ask him why? I would."

"I think I know the reason," confessed Teddy, half reluctantly. "I won't be sure, but I think it is—money."

"Money?" echoed Polly, looking up from her stitching. "A swell, like him!"

"Ah, you see," was the reply, "that is the trouble. If he was not a swell, he would find it easier. The fact is, he was brought up to expect money, and then thrown on his own resources without any. They have their place somewhere in Yorkshire—the Framleighs; and their branch of the family is a very poor one. But the proudest of the lot, people say, and the Framleigh pride, is a proverb, Framleigh, himself, was not brought up at home. An uncle took him when he was a child—the uncle, whose name they gave him, Gaston, of Gaston Court. He trained Framleigh like a prince, and intended to leave him all his money. But he was a savage, self-willed, irascible old fellow, and Framleigh's pride stirred him up against his overbearing ways; and a couple of years ago they had a final quarrel, and Framleigh's whole life was changed by it. Old Gaston will not hear his name mentioned; and Gaston Court, and all the money, are to go to a distant relative; and, altogether, Framleigh has rather a poor prospect of it."

"It is rather a poor prospect, after expecting so much," admitted Polly. "Is he in debt?"

"I am afraid so."

Polly broke into an exclamatory whistle, which would have sounded very shocking, if she had not been so very pretty, and it had not seemed so very natural.

"That is a bad look out," she said.

Perhaps this caused her to show Framleigh a little more favor. She had more sympathy with a man in rough waters than with a man who seemed to be sailing smoothly. She knew what the rough waters were herself. She had not had an easy life. Her adopted father, old Jack Pemberton, as his friends called him, was very fond of her, and she was very fond of him, but he was a disreputable old rascal, nevertheless. Polly remembered the time when she had been both hungry and cold, when there had been no Montmorenci, and no bright, square parlor, when her

amiable relative had, in the excitement of a convivial evening, forgotten to call for her at the theatre, and she had run home alone, through the wet streets, a forlorn little, six-year old sprite, to find their poor rooms dark and fireless. As Montmorenci said, it was a wonder of wonders that the child had fought her battles so bravely, and had come to no harm. She had often met with what would have been temptation enough to a weaker and less spirited girl.

Framleigh found her easier to talk to, after his trouble had been revealed to her, though he knew nothing of Teddy Popham's confidence, and possibly might have resented it, and Polly found it easier to listen to him. When his manner did not exactly please her, she forgave him for it more readily. "If I had ever been in his place, I should be as savage as he is," she would say; and, now and then, she even condescended to try to whittle away his gloom with some simple act of pleasantry, or good humor. And yet, surely, there were never two people who were less inclined to fall in love with each other at the outset.

"It is actually a sort of rest to a man to go there," said he.

"Let him come," said Polly. "He wants something to amuse him, and he does nobody any harm."

"A well-behaved, quiet young man," said the discreet Montmorenci. "An' Polly knows how to take care av herself; so why should I be raisin' objections?"

If they had been left to themselves, it is just possible that this record of mine would not have been written. But are people ever left to themselves, I ask you? Is there not always some interested or disinterested friend to open one's eyes to one's shortcomings, to one's unconscious motives, to all sorts of things, of which one might remain blissfully ignorant, but for the kindly hints of these disinterested beings?

It was Popham who first upset Polly's equilibrium; Popham, who would have readily cut off his right hand, rather than have spoken, if he had only known what a train he was applying his spark to. Let us set Teddy Popham upon a right footing. His was not a hopeful case, and he was conscious of the fact. On the contrary, it was an utterly hopeless one. His admiration for Polly was a sentiment of long standing. He had fallen madly in love with her at an early stage of adolescence. He had fallen in love with her from the boxes, on the occasion of his first dress-coat and her first benefit, when she had played some bewitching part in the costume of a Vivandier. He had hung about the theatre for weeks, and humbly and despairingly carried the

favor of supernumeraries, who were not of the slightest assistance to him, in his efforts to obtain an introduction. Pretty Polly P. had been his first youthful passion, and there the matter had ended.

When he managed to establish an acquaintance with her, he had found her simply immovable. She was not a young lady of susceptible temperament, and he merely astonished her. She was sorry for him, and that was all. If he had made love to her, for a thousand years, he could never have stirred a kindred sentiment in her good-natured, soft, little heart. Polly had not an easily awakened nature, it seemed. Up to the time she met Gaston Framleigh, she had not known what love was. She had acted it, she had studied her parts in comedies, tragedies, and farces, in which it was the point and principle; she had had lovers; she had laughed at or pitied them, liked or disliked them; but as to returning their tender passion, she could not do so, for she knew nothing of it, and some of them had been able to give her her first lesson. Some of them had even accused her of being somewhat phlegmatic. And perhaps she was, during one period—the chrysalis period—of her existence. But she had always liked Popham. He, at least, had possessed the good sense to see himself beaten; to know that the obstacle lay in himself, and not in Polly alone; and he was faithful, and sweet-natured enough to want to be her friend, when he was compelled to give up all hope of being her lover. And when the first pang was over, both faced the matter sensibly, and settled down into an honest enough Arcadian sort of friendship, tintured, of course, on Popham's side, with the fondness of the old passion, and on Polly's with the kindness of sympathy. So, certainly, the slight blunder the young man made was an innocent one. Framleigh, as I have said, was one of his ideals; and Polly being in his eyes the most perfect of her sex, it was natural that he should be generously interested in the welfare of both. Accordingly, he was led to commit himself.

"I met Framleigh, this morning, Polly," he ventured, on one occasion.

It was Saturday afternoon, and Polly was standing upon the hearthrug, before him, studying her part with great earnestness, and as she was not quite sure of her perfection in said task, she rather slighted this mention of Framleigh, by mixing him in with a hurried run of words.

"Soft! He comes! Now weakling heart be still! Yes, he was here. Daresay you met him just after his call. 'How pale his cheek—'"

"He comes here very often, doesn't he?" interrupted Popham.

"Often enough," answered Polly, without looking up from her book. "'Why do I blush? Why—why this——' I say, Teddy, isn't it stuff? Where's the use in asking why? I wonder if I shall need much prompting?"

But Teddy Popham was thinking of something else, a little mournfully, perhaps. And who could blame him?"

"Framleigh's a very handsome fellow, Polly," he said.

"Yes," indifferently, from Polly. "I suppose he is."

"Don't you know he is?" suggested Teddy.

Something in his voice, perhaps the suspicion of a tremor—for unselfish as he was, how could the poor young fellow forget that there had been a past, before the cool friendly present in which he was thinking of a future for his friend. Something in his voice arrested Polly's wandering attention, drew it from the yellow-covered old play-book, and made her look at him with some wonder.

"I know!" she echoed, and then—it seemed as if it was all in a flash—she blushed almost angrily. "What do you mean?" she demanded.

"I mean," answered Popham, quite pathetically, "that he knows you are handsome, Polly."

Handsome! And how handsome she was just at that particular moment, as she stood there, her

arm dropped suddenly down by her side, her fine hand still holding her book, a slim forefinger between its pages, her tall girl's figure looking its full, fine height in the unconscious attitude she had struck, with her head lifted, her cheeks touched with that sudden red, a little annoyed fire in her eyes.

"If you mean," she began, scornfully, and then broke off. "I don't know what you do mean," she said.

"I wonder at that," said Teddy. "You, who are so used to seeing men fall in love with you."

"In love!" cried Polly. "Bah!" And she shrugged her shoulders.

"That means," said Teddy, "that love is not your style, and I know it hasn't been, so far; but it must come some day or other, Polly; to you, just as it has come to the rest of us, and somehow it has seemed to me that Framleigh——"

"Teddy," said Polly, recovering herself, and speaking quite good-naturedly. "Framleigh is not the man." And yet, the next instant, the great pupil of her eye dilated, as if with a little feeling of quick fright, and she laughed, nervously.

"I never thought of him," she said. "Why, it's a joke, Teddy. No end of a joke, to think of—of such a thing!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

LAMENT OF JUDAH!

BY BELLA BREMER.

The evening in David's city,
The sun has crimsoned the West;
The wind blows sweet from Sharon,
The doves are going to rest.
And out from the Moslem temples
Is floating, upon the air,
The solemn cry of the muezzin,
The evening call to prayer.

To the South, the swarthy Arab
Turneth his dusky face,
Looking to holy Mecca,
The Prophet's resting place.
"Allah, Hi Allah, hu akbar,
In him I put my trust,
And Mohammed is his prophet."
And he bows him to the dust.

The city is wrapped in silence,
Only the evening breeze
Is sighing among the olives,
And stirring the cypress trees.
The Syrian moon is rising,
And flashing across the rills,
It rests, like a crown of glory,
On Zion's sacred hills.

The infidel, Turk and Arab,
The wandering traveler meets;
No tread of Jew or Christian
Echoes along the streets.
But, hark! there's a sound of weeping
Breaking the silence deep;
It comes from the place of wailing,
Where Judah goes to weep.

Where she walls over vanquished glory,
Over Zion's mournful fall,
And wet with their bitter weeping
Are the rocks on the rugged wall.
"Oh, look on thy chosen people;
Pity their fallen state.
How long, how long, oh, Jehovah,
Must outcast Judah wait!

"Oh! God of Isaac and Jacob,
Restore unto us our fane,
And build up our broken temple,
And sever these Moslem chains!"
And high on the Mosque of Omar,
Flashing o'er Kodron's vale,
Glitters the golden crescent,
Mocking that mournful wall.

"PRETTY POLLY PEMBERTON."

BY FANNIE HODGSON BURNETT.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 189.

CHAPTER IV.

DIANA DALRYMPLE.

THAT very day, in a much more imposing room, and in a much more respectable and desirable quarter, Framleigh was receiving his touch of the spur.

Diana Dalrymple was pouring out a cup of tea for him, and he was waiting at her side, by the little, marble-topped table, to receive it from her hands. It was a habit, at the house of Dalrymple, to indulge in this harmless, informal, afternoon tea. Diana liked it, and Diana was the controlling power. In the first place, Diana liked to preside at the small table, upon which the rich, chaste service was placed. It was a graceful position. She had faultless hands and arms, and was conscious of looking like a goddess dispensing nectar; and, secondly, people dropping in to make a friendly call, gentlemen visitors, for instance, seemed to warm and become genial under the influence of the steaming ambrosia, dealt out to them by this stately Hebe. Gaston partook of this mild refreshment twice a week, at least, from a sense of duty. He could not have said why he felt it a duty, however, though, perhaps, some shrewd character-readers might have hit upon the wherefore.

It was an understood thing among the family, and, indeed, in the outer world, also, that Capt. Framleigh would, some time or other, stand revealed in the character of suitor for the fair Dalrymple's hand. This was one of the articles of the Dalrymple belief, and had been for years; in fact ever since the owner of Gaston Court had announced, with his usual delicacy, that the prospect of such an alliance would not be unpleasant to him. The owner of Gaston Court, Mr. Eustace Gaston, admired Diana. He had a weakness for fine women, and Diana was of the style generally designated by connoisseurs as a fine woman. So he had promptly issued an amiable mandate to the effect that his future heir might consider himself expected to marry her, the sooner the better; and the consequence was an uncomfortable sort of an entanglement for Gaston, an entanglement which was by no means an engagement, and yet was an entanglement notwithstanding, even now, when he was the future

heir no longer. He could not quarrel with Diana, merely because he had quarreled with his uncle; and certainly Diana did not intend to quarrel with him. Sooth to say, the young lady knew better. Women have so much influence over men, you know, so great an influence for good. A man's wife will often be the means of healing a little family-wound, which would otherwise never have healed, and which would have rankled on to the end, and carried very handsome fortunes into altogether unworthy and insignificant branches of relationship. Not that the handsome Dalrymple, and her equally handsome mother were too far-seeing, or inclined to be anything but most touchingly disinterested. Nothing of the kind. But ought they to desert this young man because he was unfortunate? Should they forget the sacred ties of relationship, because he had been hasty, and a trifle ill-advised? Never! never! All the greater need, indeed, that they should endeavor to lead him again into the path of duty. In consequence of all which tender feeling Gaston found himself, somehow or other, oftener with his fair cousin than he intended to be; found that Diana's mother expected him, and was inclined to reproach him with neglect, if he did not drop in every day, or so, and take this friendly afternoon-tea with them; found it hard to obtain leave of absence, if the truth were told, and yet scarcely understood how he was influenced, and almost wished, sometimes, with the base ingratitude of his sex, that they would leave him alone.

Thus, behold him, standing upon the hearth-rug, holding one of the egg-shell cups, and trying not to appear otherwise than politely indifferent to the somewhat heavy jocosities of that delightful young adorer of Diana, the Honorable John Redmayne, known more commonly among his less fervent admirers as "that little idiot, Jack Redmayne." He looks at Jack, from under his brows, and it is well that his heavy mustache conceals his unamiable sneer. He is never partial to Jack, but is to-day specially irritated by him. It annoys him to see Diana smile that well-bred smile of hers at his wit and water, which, it must be admitted, is more water than wit; and when he hears the maternal Dalrymple laugh

sweetly and encouragingly, he could find it within his heart to wring that excellent woman's neck. Perhaps, Jack Redmayne sees this, for he turns upon him, and, figuratively speaking, rends him.

"Framleigh's dull to-day," he says. "What's the matter, Framleigh? 'Pon my soul, you are not the same fellow since the opera-dancing episode—Pretty Polly P., you know, and all that sort of thing."

He laughs with his usual inspiring cheerfulness, as he speaks—a cheerfulness which, by the way, inspires Framleigh with an almost uncontrollable desire to fall upon him, and take him by his neat little collar, and forcibly eject him from the room by way of the window.

The maternal Dalrymple pricks up her ears.

"What is that?" she says. "What is this about opera-dancing episodes and Pretty Pollys? It is surely not of Gaston you are speaking, Mr. Redmayne. Oh, what a couple of naughty boys!" And she shakes her old forefinger sportively.

"'Pon honor! it is, though," declares the much-to-be-admired Jack. "'Pon honor, Mrs. Dalrymple; I declare to you all our fellows are talking about it; how he has fallen in love with a little girl at the Princes', and goes to see her, and her old Irish duenna, and her disreputable old uncle every day. As bad a case of spoons, you know, as you ever met with. Now, Framleigh, do the straightforward thing, and own to the soft impeachment. We won't mention names, but Pretty Polly P., you know!"

Gaston's stare at him almost became a glare. How he would like to strangle him! But he controls the glare, until he forces it back into a stare, indulged in over the edge of the egg-shell cap.

"Your anxiety for information has led you rather astray," he says, with a ghost of a sneer. But the next instant he meets Diana's eye, and quails, though he is furious with himself for so quailing. Why should he quail? Why should he not have a tranquil sort of friendship for a girl beneath him in the social sphere? Of course, he acknowledges that Polly is beneath him. He knows she is, and never loses the consciousness of the fact, when he is away from her, though, sometimes, just rarely, he forgets it in her presence. Is the poor girl to blame for being born into the tawdry, disreputable life? He calls it tawdry and disreputable, you see, which Teddy Popham never did.

Diana, with a white, long-fingered hand upon the tea-pot, pauses in concocting Redmayne's third cup of tea, to speak with placid significance.

"Is it the young woman who acted so char-

mingly at Mrs. Pomphrey's entertainment, Gaston?" she says. "I think I heard several young men call her 'Polly.' And I remember you danced with her. Do you know her, Mr. Redmayne, and do you call her 'Polly' too?"

Redmayne affects confusion.

"Too bad that, Miss Dalrymple, 'pon honor," he says. "You know a fellow don't like to—"

But he is interrupted, and it is Framleigh who interrupts him, with such a suddenly acquired, but withal remarkable expression, in the usually indolent blue eyes Polly has admired, that he falls back a pace actually, as that gentleman puts his egg-shell cup into his egg-shell saucer.

"Do you know her, and do you call her Polly?" he demands of him, with a touch of fine sarcasm. "Pray tell us, Redmayne."

And then, strange to say, it is Diana who quails before him, though he has not given her a glance; and Mrs. Dalrymple sees it with that sharp, maternal eye of hers, and hastens to the rescue. Some undercurrent of satiric power in their relative has a habit of making itself felt by these two women, and then it is always their turn to eat a little diplomatic humble pie.

"Gaston," she says, "I am astonished! Mr. Redmayne, you surprise me! You dreadful creatures! Pray—pray change the subject. We really do not care to hear anything more about it. We don't believe it, you know; and it is such horrid nonsense. Mr. Redmayne, go and get that cup of yours, I command you! Diana, my love, more tea for your cousin."

And though Jack Redmayne is puzzled, and would like to improve the occasion with some of his original and brilliant corruscations, he finds that the subject drops, in spite of his efforts.

But Framleigh had received his touch of the spur, just as Polly had received hers. When he walked home, through the fog, buttoned up to the throat, in his great-coat, the sharpness of his step arose, not so much from a desire to keep himself warm, as from inward irritation. What on earth did this fellow mean? Was it possible that he had visited the girl so often that people were beginning to notice it? Was it possible that they thought it possible that he, Gaston Framleigh, could have any serious motive in view, in connection with a girl of such a class? He flushed hotly at the very thought of it. He had heard of men doing such mad things. There had been men of such infamous ill taste, that they had so far forgotten themselves; but, good heavens! he had never dreamed of such a thing. He had been the very first to condemn and sneer at such men. He must eschew the great enjoyment of the square parlor. He must keep out of

the girl's way for the future. And then, all at once, there arose before him various visions of Polly, as he had seen her at various times, when he had been conscious of finding her quite worthy of admiration. There was Polly, singing one of her theatre songs to the accompaniment of the jingling old piano, and, somehow or other, managing to sing it remarkably well; there was Polly, sewing at a theatrical little Normandy cap, and becoming so much interested in her simple task, that she had a brilliant color, and looked actually exquisite; there was Polly, standing upon the hearth-rug, with her hands clasped behind her back like a child's, as she rattled over her part with Montmorency or Teddy Popham holding the book. Polly was a beautiful creature, you know, and could do nothing without becoming transcendently lovely; and it was enough to make any man sigh, to think of throwing away the chance to see and admire her. Gaston Framleigh sighed—sighed, and fretted, and fumed angrily. The idea of being in love with the girl was absurd; but he did not like the thought of giving her up entirely.

He was going along, fretting and fuming so, when he was aroused from his moody reverie, by a sudden glare of light. How, I should like to know, was it that he had chanced to take that wrong turning in the fog, and had brought himself up right at the threshold of the Princes', and its glare of gaslights? He took out his watch, and looked at it. It was just about time for the performance to commence. Should he go in and see what was going on? Who was this hurrying up to the side-door? Evidently one of the company, who had found herself late, and was in haste. An older woman was with her, and could hardly keep pace with her impatience. He thought he knew the tall, royal, young figure. They came up in a moment, and the flare of gas fell full upon the girl's face, and she looked up at him—looked up with a start, strange to say—a disconcerted, half-annoyed start, and then gave him a curt little nod.

"Good-evening," she said, and passed by him, without another word or glance, as if she was glad to escape saying anything more.

It was Polly, who was not playing until the after-piece, and who was a little late. But it was not because she was a little late, that she had so cut short her friend's greeting; and Framleigh, through some instinct, was quite conscious that it was not.

"Has some one been meddling with her too?" he said. "It looks like it." And he bit his mustached lip quite fiercely. "I will go in and see her act," he said. "I have never seen her

act yet. I should like to know what has vexed her."

And, in five minutes, he was sitting in the theatre, glowering over five hundred heads at the green curtain.

CHAPTER V.

"DESPITE."

It was the worst thing he could have done, of course, as we all know. If he meant to keep out of danger, he should have turned away from that flare of gaslights at the Prince's; he should have gone home, and given his mind to the study of military tactics; he should have done several things he left undone, and he should have left undone the one thing he did. But he gave way to that sudden impulse, and went into the theatre, and sat watching the stage and the actors, until all was over, and Polly had sung her last song, and made her last bow, and the curtain had fallen.

When this was over, and he found himself out in the open air again, among the thronging people and carriages, he was touched with a new feeling. If he had been excited before, now he was still more excited.

"How bright and novel she made it," he said to himself. "And how lovely she seemed herself. Those little, simple songs of hers had quite a heart-thrill in them. No wonder she is such a favorite. I had no idea she possessed any such strength as this artless power."

The next morning, Polly, sitting in her easy-chair, before the fire, heard footsteps crushing the gravel on the narrow path, and, turning to look, saw in her visitor something to make her knit her pretty black eyebrows.

"He has come to ask what has vexed me, has he?" she soliloquized. "Ah, very well. Let him come. The sooner it is over the better for us both."

She might have been determined to force him into asking his question at once, for she met him almost freezingly at the outset, barely offering him the tips of her fingers when he came in, and then seating herself again, still holding in her hand the book she had been reading, though she half-closed it.

"I was among your audience, last night," he said, abruptly, and at once.

"I did not see you," she answered. "I never do see my audience."

"But you saw me, as you went in?" His vexation at her indifference showing itself in his face.

"Yes," laconically. "Of course."

Then, naturally, her coldness had its effect,

and moved him, as she had known it would. He was nettled beyond calm endurance.

"May I venture to suggest, that it appeared to my mind that you were anything but glad to have seen me, just at that particular time?"

She hesitated just one moment, slightly knitting her black brows still, and regarding the edges of her book as if she was doing so with a view to steady her mind, and fix it firmly upon the subject; and then she made her answer, which, it must be acknowledged, startled him.

"If you were to suggest such a thing," she said, "I should not say you were wrong. If I were to speak the truth, I should say you were right. I was not glad to see you. And—and, I cannot honestly say, I am glad to see you now. There!" And she lifted her eyes to his face suddenly, and looked at him as if she was glad it was over.

He rose at once, and stood before her, hat in hand; and his air was a rather surprised and lofty one.

"I am very unfortunate——" he began.

All at once he was stopped. The book was shut up and tossed on to the table, and it was Polly who interrupted him, by rising far more suddenly than he had done, and by standing up before him, looking as lovely in her impatience as it is easily possible for a young woman to look.

"You are not unfortunate," she said. "It is fortunate for you that I will tell you so. You have no right to come here, and—— Why, you ought to know it is not a good thing for you. Why do you come? It is not with you as it is with Teddy Popham. You are not like Teddy, who can't be harmed by it."

"Harmed?" he repeated, after her, quite taken aback. "I don't understand you, at all."

"I will make you understand, then," a little defiant coolness in her manner. "Not being anybody but 'Pretty Polly P.,' I have no need to be ceremonious about things. Do you know what people have begun to say of you, already? They have begun to say that you are falling in love with me."

He was guilty of a faint start, and, at sight of it, Polly's lips curled. She even went so far as to make him a little stage-curtsey.

"There is scarcely need for such alarm as that," she said. "I do not believe the report."

"You do not understand me," he protested.

"Yes, I do," said Polly. "I suppose it is natural. It sounds awful to you; and, I dare say, if I had been born what we theatre-people call a swell, it would sound just as awful to me.

As it is, you know I care very little about it. I have heard such things too often to think about them at all, when I hear them now. But with you it is different. I have heard, quite by accident," (young hypocrite,) "about that uncle of yours. What do you suppose your chances would be worth, if Mr. Gaston heard that you were spending your mornings with me, instead of—instead of with Miss Diana Dalrymple?" making a dash at this artful finale.

He was positively pale with annoyance and surprise, at this curiously new turn affairs were taking. A few hours ago, he had been resolving that he would avoid the girl, and here, after he had found it impossible to keep his resolution unbroken, was she nonchalantly telling him unpleasant truths, and almost showing him the door. If he had ever been vain and shallow enough to fancy that she was not totally indifferent to him, he would have been undeceived now, at least.

"Am I to understand from this," he said, frigidly, "Am I to understand from this, that you would prefer that my unfortunate call upon you, this morning, should be my last?"

"I think it would be best so," returned Polly, calmly.

He bowed very low, indeed.

"I may admire your frankness, at least," he said, "and thank you for it." It was the fashion of the man, that his pride was so deeply stung, that he could feel little else but the sting. "Permit me to wish you good morning," he added.

Polly arched the black brows a little, but she held out her hand.

"Let us shake hands, as a token that there is no malice between us," she said. "It is a way we have, at the theatre. Good-morning."

And so it was, that Capt. Framleigh found the tables turned against him, and walked away, looking very lofty, but feeling very bitter, and not a trifle humiliated.

When he was gone, Polly rested her elbow on the mantel, and looked at herself in the small pier-glass, at the fine black brows, at the immense black-gray eyes, at each and every charm that made her what she was—one of the loveliest women of her day. She curled her pretty, short, upper-lip, and frowned, and then broke into a queer, little apostrophe of herself.

"He was too much of a 'swell' to fall in love with you, Polly, my dear!" she said, "even if you are a beauty. Men of his kind don't do it, or, at least, don't do it honestly. Stick to your jackdaw's feathers, Polly P., and don't let yourself dream, even dream, of peacock's plumes. It was not of you he thought, for a minute; it was

of himself. It does not matter whether it vexes you to be talked about or not. You are not a fine lady, my dear!"

It is not exactly correct to say of women (as it is the fashion to say) that they are forgiving. As a rule they do not forgive injuries, either real or fancied, with the readiness which is accredited them. They may mean to forgive, they may try to forgive, and, certainly, many of them do both; but they do not find it easy, with all their efforts. With women, a wrong rankles, an injury wounds, and though there may be an apparently ready surface-healing, the flesh still throbs often, under the smooth-looking skin, and there are even times when it throbs on to the end. And as this is the case with many, so it was the case with Polly. She had received a sting, and it would be some time before she forgot it. Instinct had told her, from the first, that this friend of Teddy's did not regard her as Teddy did. He might admire her, as a score of other men did, but he did not admire her generously; he admired her against his own will, and his fastidiousness protested against his unwilling admiration. Teddy Popham would have been proud to make her his wife, and present her as such to his most Patrician friends. Gaston Framleigh would have shrunk intuitively from the mere thought of such a thing. She knew that well enough, and though she would have scouted the idea of love from her mind indignantly, and with high spirit, the knowledge burned her sorely. Perhaps, among all her virtues, her good-nature and unselfishness, the feminine inability to forget, stood forward as Polly's greatest fault. She was neither resentful, nor malicious; but she did not find it as easy to forgive, as even the generality of women find it.

What right had he to come and force an acquaintance upon her, if he could not admire her, in as unbiased a manner as he would admire that cold, white woman, at Mrs. Pomphrey's, Diana Dalrymple? She had not wanted him, or asked him to come, and he had come in spite of her. And then, as it was a fashion of hers to measure a great many people by Teddy Popham, she measured by the Teddy Popham's standard that last interview. If she had spoken so to Teddy; if at the beginning of their acquaintance she had told him that people were saying that he was in love with her, and that he must give her up because it was harming him, because his worldly interests and reputation would suffer, would he have admitted, by hesitant silence, that the thought had entered his mind, perhaps, before it had entered her own? Would he have shown no other feeling, than a lofty annoyance, at being so cavalierly treated, by a girl he felt to be his

social inferior? Would Teddy have thought of no one but himself, and his own superb indignation? Oh, how she smarted, this Pretty Polly! How she remembered it for weeks and months after, and smarted afresh every time the memory crossed her mind!

"Your friend is not coming any more," she said to Teddy. And when Teddy, in amazement, asked her why he was not coming, she coolly answered that it was because she had told him that she would rather he would stay away.

But though Polly did not forget, it was Framleigh who nursed actual resentment, for the longer time. Here was a new experience for him, and one so utterly unexpected, that it appeared all the more unpleasant. For a few days he was furious, and then he cooled down into a sort of frigid anger against the girl. But, as you will remember, he lived within sight of the small house, and from the windows of his rooms he had full view of all that went on. At night, when Montmorenci lighted the gas, in the few minutes that intervened between its lighting and the closing of the shutter, he could see into the tiny parlor quite plainly; and shall I disclose, that he somehow or other contracted a habit of waiting for this gaslighting, and took advantage of it by standing gloomily behind his own window-curtains, looking across. Angry as he was, it was queer how the mere sight of Polly still attracted him. After this change in the state of affairs, he was gloomy indeed. In truth he had reason to be gloomy. The clouds he had at one time fancied lighter began again to thicken around him. The time had come now when he was obliged to bear the consequences of old indiscretions. When he had quareled with his uncle, his high-handed pride had been his ruin. He had not realized, until it was too late, that the estrangement would be a lasting one, and that Capt. Framleigh, of the —th, who must live upon his pay, was a different individual from Framleigh of Gaston Court, the future heir to his relative's thousands. There had been so many luxuries, and fastidious extravagances to which he had been accustomed, all his life, that pride would not allow him to forego them at the outset; and there had been past follies to pay for, and, of course, the end of it all was this, that, in these days, having been forced to give up all hope that his prospects would alter, he must bear the accumulated burden of debt and humiliation in self-reproach and despair. What a fool he had been! How he cursed the weak pride, which had led him on, when he might have paused, and spared himself some weight, at least. He was obliged to forego his indulgences now. Why had he not been wise enough, to see what

must inevitably come, and face the worst at once. The world understood well enough why he had given up his elegant chambers, his cab, with its small attendant "tiger," and even his valet himself, and leaving his fashionable quarters, had taken up his abode in the modest apartments, facing the suburban residence of "old Jack Pemberton" and his charming niece. He might have spared himself unutterable pangs of after misery, if he had thrown up the game at first, and acknowledged himself beaten. He was a person of importance no longer, in society, though it must be said that he coolly displayed indifference to public opinion, and the hauteur of his air, held people as much in awe of him as ever. He had never been a man with many friends, but his reserve and cold manner had prevented his making actual enemies. Even the most officiously malicious had never approached him near enough to do more than dislike him. And thus, though he fancied his fall had been great, this was scarcely the case. However greatly his outward circumstances had altered, he was not likely to meet with either slights or patronage, as much more popular men have done, after meeting with reverses. But he had his stings, nevertheless, and sharp enough they were at times.

From her parlor window, when she sat at work during this winter, Polly often saw divers shabby men go up to the door of the house opposite, and, in course of time, she began to notice them particularly. They were not always shabby men, to be sure; but there was always a certain air about them Polly never failed to recognize; and when they were not shabby, they were flashy, and overdressed; and greatly prone to heavy, suspicious-looking jewelry. This shrewd young person knew something of this class of society by experience, and she knew the meaning of those sometimes prolonged, and often impatient parleys at the door, which ended now by the caller being admitted and shown up stairs to the captain's room, and now by his being dismissed in evident disgust.

"They are duns," she said, sagely. "It is plain enough to see that. Teddy said he thought he was in debt. He may well look savage and moody. I wonder if they are very uncivil. Some of them look as if they were. That horsey-looking man, in the big coat, for instance."

Uncivil! She should have heard them sometimes. They nearly drove Framleigh mad, upon occasions, with their brutal impatience and coarse familiarity. The man Polly had picked out so cleverly, the horsey-man in the big coat, haunted him like a nightmare.

"You are a nice lot, you snobs, you are!" said

this individual. "A taking the bread out of a pore man's mouth, and a helping to starve his children. You are a nice lot, you are, with your kerridges and hosses, and driving to the devil, and no one never seeing the color of your money. Who's going to pay me for that flash turn-out of your's, I'd like to know. I'm a honest man as earns my living by the sweat o' my brow, and I'm not going to be cheated out o' my money by no man."

After such scenes as this, Teddy Popham often came in, to find his friend sitting over an untasted meal, looking white and haggard.

"I shall go mad some of these days, my fine fellow," he would burst forth, bitterly. "Those fiends will drive me out of my senses. I can't stand it much longer. I have had a couple of them here, this morning, and they have managed to spoil my breakfast for me, pretty effectually. I can't eat a mouthful, and never tasted dinner yesterday."

Teddy himself would willingly have proffered his worldly possessions, but as yet Teddy's possessions were not unlimited.

"If my great aunt Bellingham would die, and I came into her property, as I expect to, we could make it all right, Framleigh," he would say. "And it would be the happiest day of my life. But I have just heard from Gloucestershire that the old lady is stronger than ever. I shouldn't be surprised, if she lived to be a hundred."

"You are very kind, Popham," his friend would groan. "But though you would be the more agreeable creditor, it would almost amount to the same thing, in the end. I should owe you the money, instead of owing it to half a dozen vulgar soundrels, who think it a fine thing to be able to badger and bully a gentleman."

Misfortune will invariably affect a change of one kind or another in the man who confronts it, and these misfortunes of his wrought a curious change in Gaston Framleigh. For the first few months, he had stood up against them with a lofty pride; but constant dropping wore away the stone at last, and he became conscious that his strength was failing him, in a manner he had not anticipated! A certain sense of desolation began to stir within him unpleasantly.

He found himself half-envying Teddy Popham his simple popularity. He even found himself wishing, with languid irritation, that he did not stand so utterly alone in the world, that he had possessed some ties of family or kindred to turn to. But of his own relatives he knew but little. His visits to the home of his mother and sisters had always been brief and constrained. As Teddy Popham had said, the family pride was a

proverb, and certainly they were not an affectionate household. The family pride had isolated them from the world, and congealed them, as it were. Gaston's prospects pleased them, in a manner. They were reservedly proud of his good fortune, of his physical beauty, of his "grande seigneur" air, but beyond that it was not their way to go, and decidedly he himself was never effusive.

But this winter he altered his opinions of this matter of effusiveness, and it was Polly who changed his mind for him. Here, across the way, was that rascally, disreputable disciple of Bohemia, old Jack Pemberton, going in and coming out, blatant, bombastic, and good-natured, and it was glaringly patent, that, despite his weaknesses, Polly loved him, positively loved the old sharper. She would meet him at the door, when he came in, as if his coming was an event to be rejoiced over; she would kiss him when he took his departure, and coquet about him, brushing him down, and smartening him up, and performing divers necessary and unnecessary small offices, after the manner of all affectionate women; she would take his arm, and go to church with him on Sunday evenings, with a touch of pride in her air; she would bestow upon him button-hole bouquets, from her window-garden, and she would laugh at his most threadbare jokes, as though they had been fairly scintillant with wit. There was no limit to her pretty, kindly affection for the old humbug, and it was constantly before Framleigh's eyes, alternately stinging, softening, and irritating him. If one of his sisters, Cicely, for instance, who was younger, and more easily moved than Hildegarde, if Cicely had shared his exile this winter, how much brighter she might have made it, that is, if all women were alike, and all had these lovable ways.

He knew little or nothing of women in their domestic life, but he could not easily imagine Diana Dalrymple making herself charming over such trifles as button-hole bouquets, and window-gardens. During his brief visits to his mother's bare, yet distinguished household, he had always found himself something more attracted by Cicely than her elder sister. Hildegarde was a true Framleigh. Cicely was a trifle less decided and majestic, less cold and more girlish, and now and then he had fancied was rendered somewhat timid by the barren state around her. It was Polly who brought Cicely to his mind, and it was the sight of Polly's simple beguilements which suggested to him a new idea. Long ago he had heard Cicely wish to see London, and it had not occurred to him, in those days of his prosperity,

that it was within his power to gratify her wish. But now, what if he should make up his mind to ask her to come, for a few weeks, at least? His rooms were well furnished, and his landlady a quiet and reliable person. It would make very little difference in his expenses, so little, that it was not worth the while to deny himself; and if he was not quite sure that it would be a success, at least they might try the plan. If Cicely did not find it agreeable, he could send her back to Yorkshire when she was tired, and she would have seen London, and enjoyed a temporary absence from "Bareacres," as satirical people were fond of calling the impoverished Yorkshire estate.

CHAPTER VI.

CICELY.

So, at last, he made up his mind, and wrote to Cicely and his mother, preferring his request, and in a few days came a slim, sweet-scented note of reply, and it was Cicely herself who had been allowed to write it.

"Dear Gaston did not know how surprised and grateful she was," she said. "She had wanted so much to see London. He must please to accept many thanks. Mamma was kind enough to say she might come. So, if he pleased, she would be with him on Saturday." And then, after a few more timid and half-restrained expressions of gratitude, and a stately message of sisterly affection from Hilda, she remained his "obliged Cicely."

He looked round his parlor, after reading the letter, and then rang for his landlady.

"I am expecting a visit from my sister," he said, when the good woman came, "and should like you to make suitable preparations for her comfort. If there should be anything lacking, that a young lady will require, I shall be obliged to you if you will let me know."

He had but vague ideas of feminine requirements, and though, from the wreck of his former grandeur, he had preserved relics enough to give his apartments a certain air of elegance, he was by no means certain that they would suit a feminine taste.

"They are certainly brighter and more attractive than the parlors at 'Bareacres,'" he said, with a dreary smile, as he gave his second glance of inspection. "And Cicely understands all about my changed fortunes."

He really was almost eager for the girl's arrival, and yet he was conscious that, on both sides, there would be some slight embarrassment attendant upon their meeting. It was such an unusual thing for him to have done, and had

been, he knew, so utterly unexpected by all parties.

Through some oversight, Cicely had not told him at what time she would arrive, and, accordingly, as was most natural, he hit upon the wrong hour, and missed her.

It was Saturday evening when she came, and he having been down to the station, returned to the house, and found her there awaiting him.

She was standing before the fire when he entered the room, and, hearing the door open, she turned to confront him with something of trepidation manifest in her greeting.

"I am very sorry, Gaston," she said, extending a timid hand to him. "You have been to Easton Square to meet me, have you not? It was very careless to forget to tell you when the train would arrive."

He took her hand, and, bending down, kissed her cheek, and though there was perhaps more courteousness than actual affection in the caress, there was still a touch of warmth in it that he was not prone to exhibit.

"Don't speak of it," he said. "I am glad to see you, Cicely. It was very kind of you to come."

He drew a chair up for her, but remained standing himself, feeling a little at a loss. He did not know exactly what to say, in his novel position; and Cicely herself sat looking at the fire, with a bit of additional color, and a slight air of embarrassment.

"It was very kind of you to come," he repeated. "I have not very much to offer you, and, to be honest, perhaps it was selfish to ask you, now, when I have so little, but—but, I really felt the need of some companionship, and I remembered that you had said, long ago, that you wished to see London."

Cicely looked up at him, her girl's face both surprised and touched. Could it be possible that he, Gaston, whom they had all so admired, could have felt so lonely that he could even wish to see her? He spoke of having little to offer, but the room she sat in, and the ones Mrs. Batty had shown to her, did not look as if he could be so very poor. Perhaps it was just the contrast, the old hopeful, luxurious life, that made him feel things so much.

"Ah, Gaston," she said, glancing round at the pretty apartment, and flushing quite brightly, "you never lived at the Grange, you know. If you had, you would think such a pretty room as this was an actual little paradise. Just think of that bare, mournful, immense Grange parlor; one's voice used to sound actually hollow in it. I like this so much better, and I am sure I shall enjoy being with you, so much."

He looked so pleased that she was quite reassured. She had come there, feeling no slight awe of him, and wondering how he would receive her, and how she would be able to entertain him at all. She had felt a great fear of boring him with her insignificance. But now her spirits began to be on the ascendant. If he was low-spirited and dull, perhaps she could amuse him, after all, and he would not find her so stupid. And, on his part, he found that her mere presence had done him good. She was a pretty girl, tall and willowy in figure, and with all the Framleigh characteristics of delicate regularity of features, graceful air, and noticeable carriage, this last softened greatly, however, by her extreme girlishness and that touch of timidity. He could not help observing this timidity, and observing, too, that it had increased, instead of decreasing, since he had last seen her. It was manifest, even in her movements, and showed itself, not only in a certain hesitance to express her opinions, but in the very look of her fawn-like eyes. They were absolutely "fawn-like," those brown eyes of hers, her brother told himself, though he was by no means the sort of man to indulge in high-flown comparisons. It was quite astonishing how he felt himself warm toward the girl, and how he unbent, in spite of himself. Gradually he discovered that he was making confidences, actually talking to her about the state of his affairs, and the result of his changed fortunes. He had meant to hide from her all that he could, but the innocent pleasure, and almost grateful interest she displayed in his simplest speeches, led him on.

Tea, too, with Cicely at the head of the table, was such a different meal from that he was accustomed to finding it. Seeing him so gracious, the girl brightened, and found courage. Her guileless, unworldly chatter amused him, somehow or other, and changed the current of his usually listless thought. It was a simple, unpretending sauce enough, but its flavor had a fresh piquancy of its own. And then, when tea was over, she was encouraged to explore a little, to move here and there, about the room, admiring his possessions, looking at his pictures, and turning over his books, so evidently exhilarated by her freedom, and so easily pleased, that she was really a new sensation.

When she came to his side, to bid him good-night, before going to her room, he held her hand lightly, for a moment,

"And you think you can amuse yourself for a few weeks, Cicely?" he said, feeling almost eager to hear her reply.

"I think I shall be sorry when the time comes

for me to go back," she said. "You— Oh! you don't know how dreary it is there, Gaston," in a pretty desperation. "If you wanted me, and—and mamma would not object, I am sure I should like to stay here always."

"Really?" he asked. "Really, Cicely?"

"Really—indeed!" she answered.

"Thank you," he said. "It is very good of you." And he released her hand with a positive feeling of relief. It would have stung him, even more than he was aware of, if she had seemed a thought less warm, or a shade less in earnest, than she so plainly was.

So she was domiciled with him, and fell into her place so readily, and seemed to enjoy it so much, that it was not long before he began to wonder how he had managed to exist without her loving companionship. The majority of women must be very much alike in their homes, he fancied, for she had just the charming way he had observed in Polly herself. She touched up his room, and gave it a certain air; she evidently greeted his incomings with delight, and she deplored his absence. He found buttons on his gloves, feminine works of art on his toilet table, and elegant, inexpensive novelties in his parlor. Altogether, he was a happier man than he had been for months.

But judge of Teddy Popham's surprise, when, not having chanced to see his friend for a week, and, consequently, not having heard of the change in the programme, he made an unceremonious entree into the bachelor's parlor, one night, and found himself face to face with a tall, beautiful young creature, who rose and stood before him, blushing, but still retaining that Framleigh air of graceful state and ceremony.

"I—I beg pardon, I am sure!" stammered the young man, blushing himself, most brilliantly. "I really was not aware that Framleigh——" And his pause fully expressed the height and depth of his honest confusion.

"I am Capt. Framleigh's sister," said Cicely, with ready tact. "I think you must be his friend, Mr. Popham. I have heard Gaston speak of you, often, Mr. Popham. Pray be seated. I am glad to see you."

Teddy was quite overwhelmed by her beauty and pretty dignity. Being an admirer of the Framleigh air in his friend, he found it indescribably charming in this fair creature, who seemed so unconscious of its existence in herself.

"I am waiting for Gaston now," she said. "We take tea at this time when we do not dine late. He will be pleased to find you here, I am sure."

Teddy thanked her, almost gratefully, and so

evidently appreciated her efforts to set him at ease, that, in a very few minutes, Cicely began to find herself playing her part of hostess, with marvelous aptitude. He was Gaston's friend, and fond of Gaston, she discovered. So, of course, it was quite correct to endeavor to entertain him. And Teddy was readily entertained. It would have been almost entertainment enough, to have merely looked at, and admired her, as she sat opposite to him, with her fair, idle hands folded lightly on her knee, her slender body leaning a trifle forward, her face turned toward him.

When Framleigh made his appearance, he found the two quite enjoying themselves. Cicely's low, sweet laugh greeted him, at the head of the stair-case, and when he entered the room, she was looking even prettier than usual.

"I am glad you have come at last, Gaston," she said. "Mr. Popham must be quite bored by me; he has been here half an hour?"

And then Teddy found himself beguiled into remaining to take tea with them. Exhilarated by Cicely's presence, at the head of the table, he so enjoyed himself, that he became quite brilliant. It was almost like passing an evening in the square parlor across the way, even though there was such a wide difference between the types of the two girls. And thinking of this, he could not help wondering what they would think of each other—how Polly would like this lovely, simple, stately young creature, and how Cicely would comport herself, if she should chance to meet with Polly.

"She is the loveliest little thing," he said to Polly, the very next day, in describing his experience. "The loveliest little thing. Or, stay! I should not say that, for she is anything but little. Fact is, I believe she is nearly as tall as you are, Polly. But she is the sort of girl one feels inclined to apply diminutives to, in spite of a certain stately air she has, which reminds one of Framleigh. You should see how she carries her little head, by Jupiter! It is set on her charming throat, like a lily on its stem. And even while she looks at you, with her innocent eyes, in that soft, girlish sort of way, you feel a trifle awed by the unconscious, regal curve of the little slender neck. You just ought to see her, Polly."

"She must be worth looking at," returned Polly. "Only I think I should like her better if she was less like Framleigh."

"Well, you see," Teddy answered, "I am fond of Framleigh, and you are not."

It was queer enough, that, the very evening after this conversation took place, Framleigh came into his parlor, and found Cicely standing

behind the curtains, intently watching the window of the house opposite.

"Oh, Gaston!" she exclaimed, the moment she caught sight of him. "Do come and look at this pretty girl. I have been watching her all the evening. They have such a bright fire in the room, that I can see her quite distinctly. I never saw such a handsome creature in my life. Isn't it just like a picture?"

Framleigh went to the window, and looked across. It was like a picture. The firelight filled the small room with warmth and glow; it danced on the numerous prettinesses which were Polly's own creations; on the rustic flower-stands and brackets, on the bright hearth and thick, fleecy, crimson rug, and on Polly herself, who stood on the rug, putting a brilliant cluster of scarlet verbenas in her hair, and looking at herself in the mirror over the mantel-piece.

"Only see how handsome she is," cried Cicely. "There was an old woman in the room with her, a few minutes ago, and the girl was making her laugh. I wonder who she can be? Do you know, Gaston? I almost fancied I saw Mr. Popham call there, this morning."

"Perhaps it was Popham," answered Framleigh, rather failing in his effort to speak unconcernedly. "He knows them very well. She—she is an actress, and her name is Pemberton."

Cicely's countenance quite fell.

"An actress!" she exclaimed. "Oh, dear, how dreadful! She looks like a lady. And I did so admire her." This in such a disappointed tone.

"You may continue to admire her, with perfect safety to yourself," said Framleigh, a trifle dryly. "She is a lady."

Cicely looked up at him, sensible of feeling a slight shock. His expression was an irritated one. Was it possible that he knew the girl, and—and even admired her too? What would mamma and Hildegard think? What would they say? Was it possible that an actress could be a lady? Cicely knew her mother's and sister's views upon the subject; but since she had been

with Gaston, she had been allowed a wider range of thought, and had dared to flutter out once or twice into a new world of opinion, though, of course, she had not dared to flutter far.

"Do—do you know her?" she ventured.

"Yes," he answered. "I know her."

"Oh!" timidly. "Is she nice, Gaston?"

"Nice!" he repeated. "I scarcely know what that means. It is not a man's word. But I think she is what women call 'nice.'"

"And clever?"

"People think so."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes. I may as well confess that I do."

"Gaston," hesitatingly, after a moment's pause,

"Do you know her very well? You do not go to see her now."

"I went to see her, until she was kind enough to tell me to stay at home," not a little bitterly.

"Told you to stay at home!" exclaimed Cicely, aghast. "Told *you* to stay at home! How dare she! Why, she cannot be a lady!"

"That is a matter of opinion. It was I who made a clumsy idiot of myself, my dear Cicely, and it served me right," in a burst.

There was his confession. There was a revelation he had never before made even to himself. He had come to it, by degrees. He had come to it through months of secret rebellion, and through divers struggles to retain that characteristic hauteur and frigidity of his. He had held himself grandly aloof, as he thought, from any parleyings with conscience; but they had been going on, nevertheless, and gradually they had been converted in spite of resentment and pride. Bah! Let him give it up, and own himself conquered, however hard it was. It was useless to ask himself now, whether his heart was touched, or not. It was touched, and he knew it was. He too had lost the victory. He too had fallen into the careless net of this indifferent young syren. He had fallen in love with Pretty Polly P., just as Teddy Popham had done, long ago—even he!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

LEAVING HOME.

BY HELEN A. RAINS.

I've bid thee adieu, home and friends of my childhood,
I've taken my leave of the haunts that I love;
Each pleasant retreat in the meadow and wildwood,
And each shady walk through the orchard and grove.

I've paid my last look to the vines I have watered,
That grow by the side of the low kitchen-door;
Where often at eve's witching hour I have loitered,
To breathe the perfume I shall drink in no more.

I have bidden adieu to the friends who have met me,
At morn, noon, and night, with some welcoming word
Whose hearts of affection will never forget me,
"Till death has discovered each delicate chord.

My heart is oppressed with a burden of sorrow,
No pencil of mine will attempt to portray;
But let me not dampen the hopes of to-morrow,
'Tis duty that calls me, and I must away.

"PRETTY POLLY PEMBERTON."

BY FANNIE HODGSON BURNETT.

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CHAPTER VII.

"ACROSS THE WAY."

IT was not likely that Cicely's first look across the way would be her last, and it is just as little to be expected that Polly, having heard of the new arrival, should not be somewhat curious also. When she watered her window-garden, she glanced up at the tall house, which so far threw her own small domicile into the shade, and her eyes always lingered, for a moment or so, on the window of the pretty drawing-room, and nearly every day she was rewarded by the sight of the unconsciously imposing young princess, in whom she had begun to take quite a friendly interest. And on her part, Cicely looked down into Polly's parlor, even oftener than Polly looked up into her drawing-room. This girl, whom even Gaston had found handsome and clever, must surely be worth watching, and the more she watched the more strongly and pleasantly the novelty attracted her. That tiny parlor, how pretty and unique it was? That queer, good-natured old woman, who was plainly not exactly a lady, and that oddly-dressed old man, who was so clearly not exactly a gentleman, how queer they were, and yet how this lovely creature seemed to like and exert herself to amuse them! Surely there was no single point of resemblance between Gaston's Miss Pemberton, (she called Polly "Gaston's Miss Pemberton,") and the dreadful, painted, fust young persons she had always heard actresses described as being. It would have been a sheer impossibility for Polly to look fast, or to appear "loud" in attire. She was prone to charming, soft colors and materials, her only brilliant weakness being a coquettish twist, or loop of geranium color, which the most fastidious could scarcely have failed to admire. Perhaps she exhausted her colors upon the stage, and liked a change in private life.

Of course, after a few days of watching from each window, the two began to know one another pretty well. Cicely had discovered that Polly was even handsomer than she had found her at first, and Polly had seen that the regal air was very innocent and bewitching, and that the face across the way was unworldly, and inexperienced as a child.

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"If there was any way," Cicely dared to say to herself, "and it would not be wrong, I really think I should like to know her."

"It is out of the question to ever think of such a thing as making friends with her," sighed Polly, over her mignonette and geraniums. "If it wasn't, I declare I would nod to her across the street, and send her some flowers by Teddy."

Teddy was, after a manner, a sort of go-between, and heard the comments of each upon the other; for, among the things most unlikely was any probability that he should not visit his friend more faithfully than ever, and in making himself generally agreeable, make himself doubly agreeable to Cicely.

"How beautiful your Miss Pemberton is," said Cicely to him, in one of her confidential moments. "Even Gaston admires her, and thinks her clever; and you know Gaston is not easily pleased."

No, Gaston was not, Teddy admitted; and then he inquired, with great depth of art, whether Miss Framleigh thought her brother admired Polly very much.

But Cicely rather hesitated to reply to the question, which Teddy had so diplomatically put.

"He thinks her very pretty—more than pretty," she answered. "Do you know Miss Dalrymple, Mr. Popham?"

Teddy had that honor.

"Gaston thinks Miss Pemberton more beautiful than she is, and Miss Dalrymple is a great beauty, you know, Mr. Popham. I asked him which style he admired the most, and he said Miss Pemberton's; and I quite agreed with him."

Cicely was not an absolute admirer of the fair Dalrymple. Diana had called upon her, in full state, a few days after her arrival, and the result had been the slight jarring of some fine, subtle chord in the more sensitive and refined nature; for though Cicely had received her with all the pretty, graceful ceremony of a young princess, doing the honors of her father's house, a certain indescribable atmosphere surrounding her, had held her visitor somewhat aloof.

"I do not like her," Cicely had said to Gaston, afterward. "I am sure I never could like her at all." And though she had evidently for-

gotten herself in making so open an announcement, she did not retract her opinion, even when she remembered how very frank a one it was. She did not like her.

Scarcely a visit of Teddy's to the smaller house ever passed without his discussing Cicely with Polly. Indeed, it might be said no visit was ended, without Cicely's having been the subject of one conversation, at least. And, apart from her own interest in the matter, Polly was prone to encouraging Teddy's admiration, for more reasons than one. If he would transfer his affection from herself to this pretty, refined girl, how much pleasanter it would be for all parties concerned! He was such a generous, affectionate young enthusiast, where his heart was touched, that she had quite mourned over him sometimes. It seemed so great a pity that all his faith and tenderness should be thrown away on a hard-hearted young woman like herself.

"But you know, Teddy," she had been wont to say to him, in the long ago, before he had decided his pangs were of no avail, "you know, Teddy, it wouldn't do, it really wouldn't. I should never have the right sort of feeling for you, and you know I have an awful temper, Teddy; I should end by bullying you outright. I always do bully people when they are better than I am, and make me feel it," deprecatingly. "That is one of my worst points."

But now she thought, if he would only do the most natural thing in the world, and fall in love with this exquisite Cicely. Well, just see how happy he might be. They were so much better suited to each other, and Polly had no sentimental belief in the withering effect of a blighted first love, provided the blight was an unavoidable, and not too cruel a one. She had never been cruel to Teddy, she knew. Accordingly, she encouraged him to talk about the girl, and tried to draw him out upon the subject, and enlarged enthusiastically upon the charms she had taken stock of, from her parlor-window.

"It is too bad to think; I can't try to make friends with her," she said. "I should like to hear her talk."

"Why can't you make friends with her?" Teddy asked, with a doubtful expression.

"Oh," said Polly, quickly, "I can't. You know that." And she colored, uneasily.

"I don't see why," obtusely. "I think you might, Polly."

"Bah!" said Polly. "When you turn a man out of your house——"

"Did you turn Framleigh out of your house?" interrupted Teddy.

"I told him to stay at home," quite raspingly.

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"And he was very ready to admit that I had done him a good turn in doing so." And there she stopped, and bit her lip, feeling quite savage, because she had said so much. "At any rate," she ended, "don't you know—has not your experience taught you—that women are dubious about me, and that it would be no end of stupid in me to be the first to advance toward Cicely Framleigh? I thought you were wiser than that, Teddy."

She did not need to advance toward Cicely Framleigh, however. The merest chance settled the matter for them both, with the assistance of Teddy Popham.

Perhaps the London air did not agree with Cicely very well, or perhaps the unusually cold winter was too much for her; at any rate, the middle of January found her suffering from a severe cold. Polly began to see her appearing at the window, first with a little, blue scarf tied round her throat, and afterward with a large, blue shawl folded about her; and Teddy Popham, making frequent visits of inquiry, was grieved greatly by the aspect of his charmer. It was only an unromantic, little, feverish attack, but it was very troublesome, and sometimes the princess was pale, and sometimes she was flushed; and Teddy was deeply concerned, notwithstanding the fact that she bore her ailments with the sweetest possible patience, even when prosaic influenza reigned supreme, and her charming little nose assumed a most trying shade of pink.

"You are as easily frightened as Gaston, Mr. Popham," she would say, sitting wrapped up in her shawls, in her favorite chair, and smiling at him sweetly. "It is not worth speaking of, I assure you."

And, really, there was nothing to be actually alarmed by, but, nevertheless, Teddy fancied he had serious cause for alarm, during one of his visits.

He had dropped in before Gaston's arrival, and had found Cicely looking even paler than usual. The cold had reached its climax, and she was suffering from weakness and headache.

"It is very strange," she said, during their conversation. "It is very strange that such a trifle as a cold should make me feel so dizzy. I feel as if I was not quite sure that I could stand. I wonder if I could."

"I scarcely think it would be wise to try," said Teddy, looking at her pretty, pale face and heavy eyes, uneasily.

But she had risen to her feet, with a little laugh, and stood up, trying to steady herself. It was soon evident to her anxious visitor, that she found it a hard matter, for she turned paler

all at once, and almost before the smile had died from her lips, he saw her eyes droop, and if he had not sprung forward, she would have fallen upon the hearth. As it was, she fell into his arms, with her head upon his shoulder, and her slight, pale hands hanging loose and strengthless.

He had never been more alarmed in his life than he was then by the sight of the sweet, colorless face, and the helpless, girlish form. He had never seen any one faint before, and it was rather hard upon him that this should be his first experience. If it had been a man, he could have borne it better. But this was too much for him to preserve his calmness under. Wild thoughts of cologne, and burnt feathers, and smelling-bottles darted through his agitated mind.

"What is a man to do?" he groaned. "She is as white as—as a lily, by Jupiter."

He rang the bell furiously, with his disengaged hand, even before he tried to lay her down; and the next minute Mrs. Batty and her satellites made their appearance, in a highly chaotic frame of mind. But, unfortunately, their ideas upon the subject of swoons were erratic, and mostly tended toward much-excited dashing of glasses of ice-cold water, until Teddy's soft heart quailed within him, and he interfered.

"For heaven's sake don't drown her!" he cried out, frantically. "She's not strong enough to bear it. Wait a minute," a bright thought striking him. "I know some one who will understand what to do." And, snatching up his hat, he plunged down stairs, and across the street, for Polly.

He was back again with her in less than two minutes, and, being used to such cases, Polly was quite prepared for the combat.

CHAPTER VIII.

POLLY AND CICELY.

"Oh!" she said, when she came to the arm-chair, "you have no need to be frightened, Teddy, it will soon be over."

Teddy had been right in his surmise that she would understand the case. Angolique, at the Prince's, was subject to fits of faintness and insensibility, and no one could manage her so well as her favorite fellow-actress. Polly's mode of procedure had less cold water, and more cool demeanor in it than Mrs. Batty's, Teddy observed with admiration; and, in a very short time, the landlady and her excited hand-maidens were gratefully dismissed.

"Some hot-spiced wine will do this cold good, Mrs. Batty," said Polly. "And I think we

shall not need any more help, thank you. She is recovering nicely, now, and I daresay it would rather disturb her to see so many of us. It might make her think she had been frightening us more than she has."

So, when Cicely opened her eyes, the first object they rested on was Pretty Polly P., standing by the sofa on which they had laid her, with a vinegarette in her hand.

"Oh, dear!" she said, faintly. "I hope I have not been much trouble. I wonder how it happened." And then, while she still looked at Polly, a slight color stole into her cheeks. "It was very kind in you to come," she said, and smiled so sweet and grateful a smile, that Teddy was quite ravished.

"I was very glad to come," answered Polly. "Teddy—Mr. Popham—saw that the rest were too excited to be sensible, so he ran across for me. I am used to seeing people faint."

She really was glad that she had been able to be of service; but now all was over, she felt her ardor cooling somewhat, and would not have been sorry to find an excuse for slipping away. She had no fancy for remaining to meet her enemy. He might come in at any moment, she knew, and the thought disturbed and excited her. And, besides this, she remembered what she had said to Teddy about such women as Cicely Framleigh; how they were prone to look upon her a trifle coldly, and this held her back, too; so, though her manner was neither cold nor ungracious, it was by no means effusive.

Cicely, however, was too sweet-natured to allow of any reserve. And then was not this "Gaston's Miss Pemberton?" She turned her face toward Teddy, half-timidly, and favored him with a smile, too.

"I am very much indebted to you, Mr. Popham," she said. "And I am quite glad that I fainted. I have looked at you so often through my window, Miss Pemberton," to Polly, "and—and I wanted so much to know you."

Naturally, it was not easy to get away, after such a speech as this, particularly when the kind, grateful little hand was held out, quite appealingly.

"Gaston must thank you, too," said the impressionable young princess. "It was Gaston who first told me your name."

At that very minute Polly's color began to mount to her cheeks, and she straightened herself a little, and stood more erect. She heard Framleigh upon the stairs, and before Cicely had time to say more than "he is coming now," he was in the room, looking at the small group, at Cicely on her sofa, at Polly, with her vinegarette

at Teddy standing near with mingled anxiety and surprise.

"Don't be alarmed," said Cicely. "Miss Pemberton, tell him nothing is the matter. I only fainted, Gaston, and Miss Pemberton was kind enough to come to the rescue."

He came forward, bowing low to Polly, who spoke to him with her coolest air.

"She is better now," she said, "so, of course, there is no cause for alarm. The faintness was only the result of a little weakness. She has been neglecting this cold of hers."

It was quite a surprise to Polly to find him so deeply concerned. He was almost affectionate in his manner, as he bent over their invalid. He took the slight, feverish hand, and held it, while he made his inquiries; and once he touched the bright hair quite tenderly.

Regard for Cicely induced Polly to receive his thanks as graciously as she could force herself to receive them. But she took her departure as soon as possible after his arrival. Uncle Jack would be waiting for his tea, she informed them. He would not enjoy it, if she was not there to pour it out; and, besides, it was nearly time for her to go to the theatre.

"When your cold is better," she said to Cicely, "ask Capt. Framleigh to bring you to the Prince's, to see me act."

She looked at Framleigh, as she spoke, with just the least touch of defiant challenge in her eyes. Then she went home with Teddy.

"Now," said that young man, triumphantly, when they stood in her parlor. "Now you see what a graceful, lovable creature she is!"

"Yes," answered Polly.

"And I am sure," continued Teddy, "that you cannot complain that Framleigh is cold in his manner, toward her, at least."

Polly set her mouth into an obstinate curve, as she looked into the fire.

"Teddy," she said. "Framleigh is the sort of man who would be kind to any woman who would fall down and worship him, as that nice, little, thorough-bred sister of his does; but all women could not do it, you know. I couldn't, for instance, if I was in her place. It isn't in me, perhaps," curving her neck, grandly, "because I was not born a lady."

She sent Montmorenci to make inquiries concerning Cicely's health, the next morning; but it was two or three days before she went to the house herself, and then her visit was the briefest of calls.

"Did you ever think that your Miss Pemberton was a proud girl?" Cicely asked her brother that night.

"It did not occur to me, at first, that she could be," he said, dryly, and rather bitterly too; "but I have thought so lately."

"I think," returned Cicely, reflectively, "that she is very proud, and—well, just a bit inaccessible."

Remembering his first impressions of Polly, and his lofty disapproval of her *nonchalance*, and high spirits, and occasional touches of theatrical slang, Framleigh smiled a smile that was positively savage. He was savage in his self-contempt. It was terribly rasping to feel himself so egregious a blunderer. What a consequential fool Polly must think him.

"I did not seem to make way with her at all," went on Cicely, shaking her head, and speaking in a sort of soliloquy.

"That was because she dislikes me," rashly.

"Dislikes you!" echoed Cicely. "How can she? How could anybody dislike you?" with tender enthusiasm.

Framleigh took the gentle hand, which she had laid on his shoulder, and caressed it.

"Every one does not see me through your eyes, Cicely," he said. "You are a kind, loving, little creature, my dear."

His intercourse with the girl had been productive of good results for both. He had gained warmth of manner and feeling. She had gained courage. He found it easier than he had ever fancied it would be, to speak tenderly, and bestow caresses upon her. The self-contracted loneliness of his whole previous life had been his bane. He had become cold and selfish through it, and this change was exactly what his nature had required. When he had seen her at home, in his brief visits, he had never thought he would be so fond of Cicely.

CHAPTER IX.

"IN WHICH COMES A CLIMAX."

NOTWITHSTANDING the fact, that she had not found her acquaintance with Polly progress rapidly, Cicely did not allow herself to be actually chilled.

"I will take all the more pains to make friends with her," she said to herself. "If Gaston has vexed her, there is the greater reason for my trying to please her, for his sake."

So as soon as she was well enough, she attired herself in all her modest bravery, and made a call upon the young mistress of the house opposite, and spent half an hour in the small parlor, and quite won Montmorenci's heart, by her grace and simple elegance, and innocent, kindly respect of manner. She won upon Polly, too, as

indeed she would have won upon any one else. Not being positively stony-hearted, Polly found it hard to resist her, even when she ventured to hope that they would see each other often, and become friends, instead of mere acquaintances.

"When I came here first," Cicely said, "I thought I should only remain a week or so; but Gaston seems to want me more than ever now, and he makes me so happy, and is so kind, that I should feel sorry to leave him, even to go home." This last added as a matter of duty to mamma and Hilda. "You have no brother, Miss Pemberton?"

"No," answered Polly. "None but Teddy Popham. Teddy adopted me, you know. He is a very good substitute."

"I should think he would be," said Cicely. "He seems very kind to everybody. Gaston is very fond of him."

It was always "Gaston" with Cicely. She would have had her doubts about the Angel Gabriel, if Gaston had not approved of him. But, despite this amiable weakness, Polly could not help liking her, and giving way to her, in the face of her own private prejudices.

After this call, it was so natural that the two should become friends in earnest, that it was even unavoidable. But Polly managed her visits diplomatically. She never forgot the time of Framleigh's incomings, and if she chanced to encounter him, it was always on her way home; and this only occurred once or twice, when he was a trifle earlier than usual. It was useless for Cicely to plead. Uncle Jack's tea and the theatre were always ready as excuses.

"Do you think I would run the risk of being obliged to stay, or run away," she said to Teddy. "No, I tell you, I would rather know that we stand just as we do. Let us be neither friends nor enemies."

But it was ordained otherwise.

Cold as his friends called him, and cold as he seemed, Framleigh was scarcely of a cold temperament, in truth. He had his inner fires, and Polly had the power to rouse them. It was wonderful how her obstinate indifference stung him. He felt positively fierce, sometimes, when he thought of her cleverness in avoiding him.

"Does she think that I would attempt to intrude upon her?" he said to Cicely. "She has no need to fear it." And he quite longed to prove to her, that he could stand as far aloof as she wished.

But she gave him so little opportunity, that she almost drove him frantic. In secret, he was goaded to madness, and when at last fortune gave him the chance she refused, he could not control himself, as he had meant to do.

Cicely had arranged a window garden, upon the model of Polly's own, and during its arrangement, numerous unceremonious visits had been interchanged between the two girls. Cicely had run over to Polly for instruction, and Polly, in her turn had crossed the street, with seeds and slips, and bulbs. So one afternoon, coming in unexpectedly, Framleigh entered the room, to find Polly standing by the flower-boxes, with the tiny trowel in her hand.

"I am glad," she began, turning round, but seeing who it was, she stopped, and froze at once. "Oh, it is you!" she said, the hand holding the trowel dropping down at her side. "I beg pardon. I thought it was Miss Framleigh. She was out when I came, and as I had brought her some rather delicate slips, I took the liberty of remaining to put them in the boxes. They needed attention, at once."

He came to her side.

"You are very kind," he began.

"Not at all," interposed Polly, coolly. "I am fond of plants, you know. I have finished now, luckily," forgetting how the word would sound. "So I will go. I daresay you will tell your sister—"

The haughty color flashed over his face. He could not help interrupting her.

"I am very unfortunate having made myself so obnoxious to you that you feel yourself lucky—"

"I ask pardon," Polly stopped him, without appearing in the least disturbed, however. "Luckily was a stupid word to use."

"It is I who should ask pardon for intruding upon you," he said, in restless anger.

"'Intruding' is as absurd a word as 'luckily,'" said Polly. "Will you tell Miss Framleigh—"

"I will tell her how unfortunate I have been," he returned, with no slight touch of galled bitterness. "Cicely should respect highly the brother who deprives her of her friends."

Polly checked herself in the act of shrugging her shoulders, and turned round to touch up a plant; but she made no remark; and her indifference fired Framleigh all the more. He had never been so cavalierly treated in his life. It seemed this girl's forte to stab him in the weakest part of his armor of exclusiveness, and render it useless.

"You force me to defend myself," he broke forth.

"Against what?" Polly asked, concisely.

"Against my own humiliation," he answered.

"For even Cicely sees how you avoid me. Are you afraid of me, Miss Pemberton?" with savage irony.

"Not at all," answered Polly.

"Then why exercise such diplomacy in keeping out of my way. Pray, give me the chance to prove to you, that no danger will accrue from your facing me occasionally." Then his voice and manner changed suddenly, both at once. A shadow fell upon his face, and showed her how careworn it was. "I am very fond of Cicely," he said. "And Cicely is very fond of me. In fact, I think I may say that Cicely is about the only creature on earth who is honestly fond of me; but she is both affectionate and ignorant, as you know. I believe she even respects me, Miss Pemberton," with another touch of sarcasm, "and I cannot afford to lose her respect. I scarcely like the idea of appearing contemptible in her eyes, as I must appear, under existing circumstances."

"Do you mean," demanded Polly, sharply, "that I make you appear contemptible, in Cicely's eyes?"

"How can it be otherwise?" he asked.

She hesitated a moment, and then got the better of her hesitation.

"Nothing would make you appear contemptible to Cicely," she said.

"Thank you," with even more irony than before. "You are very kind."

Polly glanced out of the window, into the street.

"Here is Miss Framleigh now," she said.

In two minutes Cicely came in, bright and glowing, from her walk, and greatly rejoiced at the sight of Polly in conference with Gaston. It must be a friendly conference, she thought.

"How kind of you to come," she said. "And how good you were to stay. And you will let me keep you, for the rest of the evening, will you not? Montmorenci can take care of Mr. Pemberton for once."

What impulse prompted Polly to acquiesce, it would be hard to say. Perhaps it was a touch of obstinacy, or defiance. Perhaps she felt a desire to prove her strength and indifference. If she really thought she was afraid of him, it was as well that she should learn that she was not. Afraid! She repeated the word to herself with great scorn. What should she be afraid of?

She stayed, however, and made herself very amusing. Teddy Popham, who came in during the evening, thought he had never seen her in a more entertaining mood. And yet he saw that she had altered somehow of late. She was not so simple and good-humored; she made more clever speeches, of a sharp and rather satiric nature, and she was less open.

"There is something wrong about you, Polly," he said to her, in guileless confidence, afterward. "You are changing every day."

"People generally do change, as they grow older," was Polly's unsatisfactory reply.

"Older!" exclaimed Teddy, and then all at once he stopped, and looked at her face. "Well," he said, "you have grown older, I believe; but it isn't in the way you mean, Polly."

"Isn't it?" said Polly. "Charmed to hear it, I'm sure." And her air and tone were so listless and cool, that the subject dropped of its own accord.

She changed her tactics with regard to Framleigh, however, for reasons best known to herself. She avoided him no longer, and she no longer refused Cicely's invitations. She often spent her evenings in their parlor, and Cicely's admiration of her became stronger every day. Framleigh himself could only look on. He found himself standing as far aloof as ever. He, too, discovered that she had changed. She was even growing handsomer, and her beauty was becoming of a more pronounced type. Her dormant power was beginning to develop and assert itself. Her slender, straight young figure was actually more imposing than the fair Dalrymple's more liberal curves. She carried her head higher, and flashed out as Diana never did. There was less repose about Polly, and more of prideful fire.

"My dear," said Diana to Cicely, during one of her numerous friendly calls, "is it possible that you know what that young woman is?"

"I know," answered the princess, with a pretty touch of dignity, "that she is my friend, and that I am very fond of her."

It must be confessed that the position was a difficult one for Diana. She could not neglect Cicely, of course—though what a remarkable whim, this whim of Cicely's of visiting her brother was, to be sure—she could not neglect Cicely, any one would understand, and yet, in making her gracious calls at the house, she constantly found that she must confront this young person of whom she could not approve. And she must be civil to her also, which was the worst part of it. If she might have ignored her, it would have made her more comfortable; but Polly, with her tall, straight, lovely form, and steady, fire-flashing eyes, and red, contemptuous lips, was not so easily ignored. Polly could not move, could not speak, could not glance toward her, without defying her in a subtle way, and suggesting to her that she knew her weak points, and could have made divers sharp speeches concerning them, if she had chosen. And then again, was there not Gaston, who actually treated this girl with the loftiest respect, even though she slighted, and was sometimes half-rude to him? Affairs had arrived at a strange pass indeed.

But if she could not openly slight her enemy, she was not left entirely without resources. She patronized her with a delicate condescension, and occasionally affected to encourage her, and though it was only at times that she dared to do this, and though at none of these times did Miss Polly quail before her, the strategy was not without its result—she managed to rasp her victim, and render her temper anything but amiable, and when she was not amiable, strangely enough, it was always one person who suffered, and that was Gaston himself.

The Prince's was often honored with the presence of Capt. Gaston Framleigh in these days. It was the one luxury the young man allowed himself, and even Cicely did not know how often he indulged in it. Polly did, however. After the first two or three times of seeing the well-known face, in the certain row, she was never afterward unconscious of it, when it was present. However angry she might feel at her own weakness, she could not help knowing that it was there, looking harassed, and discontented, and a shade care-worn, and always following her with its proud, reproachful eyes. For the time came when they were reproachful, though what right they had to reproach her, Polly professed not to know. It was nonsense, she said to herself, sheer nonsense! But it made her uncomfortable, and once or twice she had narrowly escaped losing self-possession under them. Her manner toward Framleigh, in private, was captious, haughty, and severe. The gentle, kindly young princess was quite touched and wounded by it sometimes, and listened, with actual pain, to her cold, or satirical speeches. When the handsome, black brows drew themselves together, into that slight, yet ominous frown, Cicely shrank, in spite of herself.

"You quite frighten me, sometimes," she would say. "You are so quick, and say such cutting things. And, somehow, dear, it always seems to be Gaston who makes you angry. And yet, I am sure, you don't mean to be cruel."

"But I think I do," Polly had answered her, suddenly, once. "At least I am not sure that I don't. I like to say sharp things, that cut people I am not fond of. And I may as well confess, that I am not fond of your brother. I am not like you—it is not easy for me to forgive." And the black brows knitted themselves then in earnest. "Capt. Framleigh made me angry, once, and I have not forgiven him."

"Oh, Polly," cried pretty Cicely, piteously. "And shall you never forgive him?"

"I don't know," answered Polly. "The fact is, I never think about that; but, at any rate, I have not forgiven him yet."

It is probable that she was all the harder upon him, because, now and then, she found herself pitying him, in secret, though grudgingly. Of course it was rather hard that he should have all his brilliant prospects fading away; upon the whole, it was very hard, and taking all things into consideration—debts, for instance, among them—it was no wonder that he was growing pale and care-worn. She had found out, from Cicely, that these debts had begun to press upon him, even more heavily and gallingly than they had done. He had told Cicely that he had even entertained the idea of selling his commission, and trying to get into business, "though he hated business so," Cicely added, with tears. "It is dreadful," she said. "And there are days when he neither eats nor sleeps; and once, when one of these horrible men came, and spoke so roughly to him, he told me that he must send me home, because I ought not to know anything about such things; and he could not bear to let me be troubled; but I said that I could not bear to leave him all by himself, and, indeed, I don't think I ought to do it, either. Do you, dear?"

"No," replied Polly, decidedly. "I would not;" and then she colored furiously, as if she had made a slip, and was vexed at having done so. "If I were his sister," she added, rather disjunctedly.

"If——" faltered Cicely, after a pause, "if he would marry Diana Dalrymple, Uncle Gaston would make friends with him, and let things go on just as they did before. At least he has almost said as much."

"Then he should marry her, by all means," said Polly, with such a satiric air that Cicely looked up at her, in gentle wonder. "It seems that it would be a good thing for both of them. Why doesn't he do it? He has only to ask her, of course; or, perhaps, he might dispense with the ceremony."

"You are sneering at Gaston, again, Polly," said Cicely, almost inspired to take up arms. "And you are unjust, as usual. That is not Gaston's way. He is a gentleman."

"And Miss Dalrymple is a lady," said Polly, "and so may expect consideration."

Upon this subject of sending Cicely back to Yorkshire, Framleigh had thought seriously. Instead of improving, matters became worse every day. He had less hope, and his creditors were more impatient. He began to see the despatch of his position. The end of it all was, that he must do something decided. And what was there to be done? He could only dispose of his commission, and the small remnant of his worldly goods, and go down in the social

scale a few grades lower. He might pay his more important debts, go to "Bareacres" for a while, and then throw himself upon the world. His ideas of what his future was to be were so indefinite and unreal, that he sneered at them himself. As a gentleman at leisure, he had not learned his lesson of life in a practical school. But there was not much use in talking to Cicely. Cicely wanted to stay, and help him to fight his battles out. Let her only stay with him until all was over, and he had no further need for her presence, and then she would go to Yorkshire and Bareacres without a word of protest. And he would see, too, that she could be practical and helpful. There were hundreds of things she could do, she was quite sure. And then she would take his hand, and hold it caressingly, as she pleaded, sometimes kissing it gently, and laying her cheek against it, with her eyes full of tears of pity for him.

"Even Polly thinks I ought not to leave you," she said, at last, one day.

Even Polly! Did Polly condescend to give the matter a thought? Framleigh colored, and yet felt a sort of uneasy pleasure in the idea.

"Have you been talking to her about it?" he asked.

"I am so fond of her, and she is so clever," said Cicely, half-apologetically. "We talk to each other about everything. You don't care, do you, dear?"

No, he answered her, he does not care; and, recognizing the influence Miss Pemberton exerts over her affectionate, easily-influenced nature, a plan suggests itself to him. He really thinks it would be best for her to return to Yorkshire, before the unpleasant winding-up of his affairs, which he sees must come, despite its galling unpleasantness. He is fastidious about Cicely, and does not like the thought of allowing her to be brought into contact with the rough side of life. But it will not be easy to convince her, he knows. So he thinks of Miss Pemberton, who has been good enough to hint that it is her duty to stay.

"If she tells her that it is her duty to go, Cicely will believe her, in spite of her inclinations," he says to himself.

Accordingly, he presents himself, to Polly's great astonishment, in the small parlor, the next evening, just at the time when the young lady is waiting for Uncle Jack. Montmorenci has gone out to buy tea-cakes, and Miss Polly, being alone, rises to greet her unexpected visitor, rises with an air of great state and gravity. She would like to know what has brought him. But, of course, she cannot ask the question, and is obliged

to wait until he explains himself, which he does almost immediately.

He was very brief and non-effusive about it, using no more words than were absolutely necessary in his explanation; and yet, for all this, not appearing as self-contained as he might have been, under different circumstances.

He would not attempt to disguise, he said, indeed it would be absurd to attempt to disguise, what Miss Pemberton already knew. He was involved in serious difficulties, and found that he must alter his mode of life. And among the many things he must give up, he must even give up Cicely. He should go to Yorkshire himself, after all was over, but he wished Cicely to go first, to go as early as possible, in fact. He was desirous of sparing her the annoyance of facing the total wreck of even this remnant of his lost fortunes. And for this reason he had called upon Miss Pemberton. He could not persuade Cicely that it would be best for her to leave him to himself, and from a few words she had let drop, he had discovered that she believed her friend agreed with her in her opinion.

"I did agree with her," interposed Polly, suddenly. "I was glad she was strong enough not to shrink from trifles. I thought she was right in staying, and I told her so."

She drew her slim figure up, and looked decided, but she kept her eyes as much away from Framleigh as she could. She found it pleasanter to look at the fire.

But Framleigh was decided, too.

"It was generous of her to have so much courage," he said. "But I do not wish that she should make the sacrifice; and——"

"If you do not wish it," interposed Polly, again, "I think she had better go."

"I think," said Framleigh, "that you are misunderstanding me. But, nevertheless, if you will be so kind as to tell her that you feel that she had better go, you will oblige me. I came here to ask you to do so."

Reluctantly, and quite in spite of herself, Polly raised her eyes from the fire, and favored him with a swift glance of inspection. If she could have held herself severely cold, she would have done so, but as soon as she had looked at him, she found her mood changing. He was paler, and more care-worn than she had ever seen him; he was even thinner. It struck her all at once that he must have suffered more keenly than any of them had fancied. Something in this appeal of his touched her, too. Where had his fridity and lofty *hauteur* gone? How was it, that he could deign to come to her, after she had treated him with such sharp contempt? He

certainly would not have come to save himself any trouble or pain, she knew that much of him. And must there not be some redeeming point in the nature of a man, who, being so proud, could yet sacrifice his pride for the sake of another? She felt inclined to believe, now, that he really did care for Cicely unselfishly, after all her own sneers at him. He must care for her, or he would not have done this. And yet, even while she thought this, she grudged the relenting in her tone when she spoke to him. It was not easy, as I have said before, it was not easy for her to forgive.

"I am sorry," she said. "I am sorry that there is no alternative." And then, remembering what Cicely had said about the alternative of his marrying Diana Dalrymple, the warm blood mounted to her cheeks.

He remembered this alternative too, and finched as he remembered it. He wondered if she had heard. It seemed very likely, considering Cicely's remark, about their talking over "everything."

"There is no alternative that I choose to accept," he said.

"I think," commented Polly, dryly, "that I should accept almost any."

Then he knew that she had heard, and the next minute Polly saw that she had committed herself, in her anxiety to appear ignorant, and make a slightly cutting speech.

But Framleigh kept himself well under control, despite his knowledge of the fact, that she knew as much of his position as he did himself. He returned to his subject as collectedly as he could.

Would she speak to Cicely? Might he depend upon her to do so?

"As you wish it so much," she answered, "I suppose I must; but I am not at all sure that it will be of any use."

He thanked her, feeling stung, notwithstanding his relief, by an inward conviction that she thought him ungracious. He did not mean to be ungracious, and it was hard enough to face the prospect of bearing all his petty humiliation alone; but pride, as well as affection, forbade him to allow Cicely to share them with him. It was not very easy to bid her good-night, and go away, without attempting to clear himself, and trying to show her what he really meant; but experience had taught him that any effort at explanation would only place him in an additional false position. So he went away in silence.

It is possible, however, that Miss Polly had received her sting also, though even I, her chronicler, cannot explain when she had received it, or in what manner. But if she had not received a

touch of one sort, or another, why should she have so knitted her lovely black brows, and have shown such discontent and annoyance, when her visitor was gone, and had left her alone to her thoughts? She stirred the fire, frowning, and seated herself in her chair, frowning, and as she sat and looked at the bed of coals, she was frowning still, and looking very severe and handsome.

"It serves him right," she said, quite sternly. "But—but it is bad enough, of course; and it is very hard, for Cicely." And the next minute, strange to say, something large and bright slipped down her cheek, and lay a sparkling drop upon her hand—a sparkling drop which was nothing less significant than a great, lovely tear. I am of the opinion, too, that this tear would have been followed by others, if she had been allowed leisure; but she was not allowed it; for the very moment this first, bright drop fell, there came the sound of Uncle Jack's latch-key; and when the front-door opened, it was evident that Uncle Jack was in a most extraordinary state of hurry and excitement, for he did not even give himself time to dispose of his hat, but came bursting into the room, breathless, and even more boisterous and blatant than usual; and without leaving her time to utter a word, caught her in his stout arms, and embraced her with fervor.

"Go and tell old Buxton to go to the devil, Polly, my girl!" he roared, joyously, and with the most exhilarating spirit. "Tell him to go to the devil, and stop there. We've done with him, I tell you! We've done with dancing, and fiddling, and cutting capers, my dear, for your fortune's made, and Pretty Polly P. is as heavy a swell as any of them."

CHAPTER X.

"IN WHICH WE ARE SURPRISED."

THERE was something a little unusual in Polly's manner, during the two following weeks, Cicely thought: there was something about her not easily understood. Sometimes she was silent and abstracted, and then again she might almost have been influenced by some strong, but secret and restrained excitement. She was not herself, it was plain, and she was actually nervous. And yet, it could scarcely be anything decidedly unpleasant that disturbed her. Cicely at last was sure it could not be, for she had never found her friend so amiable, and certainly she had never found her so affectionate, as she was at this time.

"And, sometimes, when I look at you, Polly," she said to her, "when you have been quiet for a moment or so, you seem to have quite forgotten yourself, and you are smiling as if you were think-

ing of something that made you happy. What is it?"

"It!" repeated Polly. "I can't tell you, I am sure, what it is. It is just as probable as not that it is only a mood. I am full of moods, you know. Let us be thankful that this is not a disagreeable one."

"It is anything but a disagreeable one," said Cicely, admiring her. "It is very nice. It makes me feel as if something delightful had happened to you."

"Perhaps something delightful is going to happen to me," said Polly. "Let us hope so. I think I could bear it."

Somehow or other, they always seemed to drift away from the subject before Cicely's surmises were more than surmises of the vaguest description; but it was not until long afterward that she began to suspect that anything more than chance had changed the topic of their conversation. But then Cicely had her own troubles to think of, and more important still, these troubles of Gaston's. She was quite desperate about Gaston, now and then—so desperate, indeed, that even the daring plan of privately appealing to his obdurate relative, had fitted through her affectionate little brain.

"If his debts were only paid, you know," she said to Polly, "there would be no need of his selling his commission, and he could live upon his pay, poor fellow, until something occurred."

Cicely had an innocent belief that something must "occur," ultimately, which would raise her idol to his old gilded pedestal. Fortune could surely never be so cruel as to ignore his evidently just claims. She might pass other men by, but Gaston—Gaston was so different.

"And I could stay with him," she went on. "I shall have a little money, though it is only a very little, when I am of age, and I could sell grandmamma's jewels, if he would let me. Grandmamma left me her jewels, and though the settings are quaint and old-fashioned, the stones are very good. If the debts were only paid, I am sure we could be happy, if we were not rich. Don't you think so, Polly?"

And Polly answered her that she did think so, and then all at once lapsed into one of those mysterious fits of forgetfulness, in which her great, dark eyes wore their most pre-occupied and solemn look.

So Cicely continued her impractical, but eager planning, and wondered what Uncle Gaston would say, if she dared, at last, to appeal to him, and what her brother would say, if her appeal was successful, and wondered whether he would be very much displeased at the sacrifice of his pride:

and then felt sure he would, and so faltered, and longed, and pondered, until she felt as if she could not give the matter up, and was more loth than ever to face the sacrifices of the beloved one.

And after all this, judge of her surprise, judge of her unutterable thankfulness for the sudden turn of Fortune's wheel, which eventually occurred, just before it was too late, in the very nick of time, as it were.

One dreary evening, when she was feeling unusually dispirited, and was just making up her mind that she must give up, and go back to Yorkshire, obediently and without delay, she was surprised to hear Gaston coming up the stair-case hurriedly—surprised, because he was not in the habit of coming in until an hour later.

"Why, Gaston," she exclaimed, as he entered. "It is scarcely five!"

He came to the fire, looking excited, and even pale, the expression of his face a disturbed, and yet, curiously enough, an almost relieved one. "I hardly know how to tell you," he said. "It is so singular."

"What is singular?" she interrupted, in spite of herself. "What has happened?"

"Yes," he answered. "Something has happened. It is like the climax in a play, or a point in a novel. Mr. Gaston has paid my debts—paid them to the last farthing!"

It was such a relief to her, and was at the same time so startling, that she could scarcely take it all in. She flew to him, and caught hold of his arm, in wild delight and amazement, tears of joy leaping to her eyes.

"Oh, Gaston!" she cried. "How glad—how glad I am! I can hardly believe it! How did it happen? When did you learn it? Is he going to forgive you? Can I stay with you now? It seems like a dream!"

"It is like a dream to me," said Framleigh. "I only learned it, about an hour ago; and I cannot comprehend yet what it means. He has not even allowed his name to be mentioned, and has not written a word of explanation to me; but the bills are paid, and, of course, it is he who has paid them. I do not think it is a sign of returning favor, however. I think it is a caprice on his part, and I fancy that he means the matter to end here; so you see, greatly as I am relieved, I am placed in an awkward enough position. It would be like him even to ignore any thanks I might offer to him." And his face fell, and shadowed as he spoke.

"I am grateful," he added, at last, in an altered tone; "but there is a sting in it, Cicely, there is a sting."

"But," said Cicely, "I think he must mean to make friends with you."

"I am sure he does not," returned Framleigh. "And if he did—— Well, there would be a sting in that too," in a wearied voice.

"A sting!" she echoed.

"Yes," was his answer. "But it would not rest in the friendship; it would lie in the old luxurious dependence. That would be harder to face now." But, seeing her tender, bewildered look, he broke off suddenly, relieving her with a smile. "But there will be no need for our parting now," he said, "if you are not tired of your slow life. Thank fortune for that! It would have been hard enough to part with you, Cicely."

"Would it?" she said, with shy delight. "I am so glad, Gaston." And she clung to the hand she held, in a pretty fervor that quite touched him.

That evening, Framleigh wrote his letter of thanks to his uncle, and a delicate task it was. He was placed in an ungracious enough position, one may see, in being rendered so greatly the debtor of a benefactor, who had not deigned him

a word, and who, ten to one, had no other motive in his generosity than a sort of churlish pride. The elder Gaston was not an amiable individual, as we have hinted, and it was a fashion of his to bestow favors in a manner which made them hard to swallow.

And the letter having been written and sent, the result was exactly what Framleigh had anticipated. In a few days it was returned, unopened, from Gaston Court, and without a word of comment. Framleigh brought it enclosed in its envelope, and showed it to Cicely, with a rather stony look in his face.

"I knew it would be so," he said, "but the knowledge scarcely makes it more agreeable to contemplate. This means that he will have none of me, and that he has merely relieved me of my difficulties to save the family pride. It is just what I expected." And he tossed both letter and envelope into the fire, and watched them blaze up and die out, thinking that the blackened, curling ashes were not unlike those once dazzling expectations of his.

(TO BE CONCLUDED.)

MEET ME IN HEAVEN

BY EMMA SANBORN.

"Meet me in Heaven," she said, and smiled.

To think her feet so nearly trod
The path that leads through "gates ajar,"
The path of light, to home, and God.

'Twas long ago, yet on my ear,
Her words, like sweetest music fell;
I bear them with me on my heart,
Through every scene of joy or ill.

To-night, I see again the room,
Whence passed her sinless soul away;
I see the hectic of her cheek,
The lustre of her sparkling eye.

'Tis all unchanged; the flowers she loved,
The books, the music, all are here,
And friends, who weep to speak her name,
Are waiting still—but she's not here!

In yonder dell, a white cross stands,
'Mid waving boughs, and flow'rets fair;
It is a spot of quiet rest,
And holy peace—but she's not there.

Ah no! not there, not here, for us,
No more on earth, her smile so rare;
But when shall ope the pearly gates
Upon our view—she will be there.

TWILIGHT FANCIES.

BY E. M. WITHROW.

LIGHTLY I float, in the tiniest boat,
With a gauzy gossamer sail;
Idly I dream, as the swift waters gleam,
Low down by the shining rail.

In the tender glow, as the bright days go,
I am building my castles fair;
But the morning light, that follows the night,
Scatters them into the air.

Lightly I float, in my fanciful boat,
'Neath skies that are banks of gold;

And the mystical light, of a soft Summer night,
My 'wilderer senses enfold.

The day is asleep, in a slumber so deep,
She wakes not, at kiss of the night.
And my heart, like the day, has been wafted
To a region of blissful delight.

Borne on by the breeze, as it sighs through the trees
That border the beautiful stream;
I forget all the cares, all the agonized prayers,
In an exquisite, far-away dream.

"PRETTY POLLY PEMBERTON."

BY FANNIE HODGSON BURNETT.

CONCLUDED FROM PAGE 332.

CHAPTER XI.

A SURPRISE TO CICELY.

OF course. Polly heard all about this, and of course, Polly both condoled and rejoiced with her friend; and Cicely was delighted to observe that she looked as much relieved, as she herself had felt.

"It is news worth hearing, that you will not have to go away," was her comment. "I should have missed you, every hour of the day. You think there is no danger of your mother sending for you, Cicely?"

"Oh, no," said Cicely, quickly. "There is no danger of that, I am sure. You see, both mamma and Hilda are—are different. They would not live in London in the plain way I do, and so, of course, they do not care to come at all; and so long as I am safe with Gaston, I don't complain. I—well, I almost think they feel relieved."

"Oh!" said Polly, and then began to wonder, with some shrewdness, whether the august twain would be as much at ease if they knew that this fair young scion of their house was consorting with such dangerous companions, as play-acting young women and their amiable duennas. It seemed as if wonders were not to cease.

The first surprise had not died out of Cicely's mind before another presented itself; and a surprise, too, of so startling a nature that it was an absolute shock of bewilderment.

Just six weeks after the date of Framleigh's relief, Polly walked in upon Cicely, with a marvelous piece of news to relate. She came in between twilight and dark, and almost as soon as her first greetings were over, delivered her announcement as suddenly as if she had shot it out of a cannon.

"Cicely," she said, "something delightful has happened to me."

Cicely looked at her brilliant color in surprise.

"It must be something very nice, indeed," she said. "Your cheeks look like carnations. What is it?"

"It is something very nice, indeed," said Polly. "I have had five thousand pounds a year left to me."

Cicely sprang up with a cry.

"Five thousand pounds——"

"A year," said Polly, nodding her handsome head, "per annum, you know. So, I think I shall give old Buxton notice. Wouldn't you?"

"Oh, Polly," cried Cicely, quite stunned, and at the same time not a little puzzled by her friend's coolness of demeanor. "This is like a chapter out of a novel! Are you sure it is true? Where did it come from? Oh, how glad you must be!"

"It came from Scotland, from Ayreshire, where my great aunt, Mrs. Alison Rossitur, lived and died. My mother was an Alison Rossitur, but after she ran away with my father, her friends would not see her again, and she was quite cut off from them. As to this money—the fact is, Mrs. Alison Rossitur was a whimsical old body, and rather quarrelsome, and I fancy she left her money to me, because she had quarrels with every one else."

She spoke quite coolly about it, almost indifferently, Cicely thought. It might have been one of her most frequent experiences to find herself the possessor of a goodly fortune. It quite bewildered Cicely to see her sit down, as she did afterward, and begin to discuss prospects, and form plans with all the nonchalant composure in the world. Of course, there would have to be some change in her mode of life, and this must be talked about. Where was the new house to be, and how was it to be furnished? These were the questions to be settled now, and she wanted Cicely to help her to settle them.

"She talked about it, as if she had been expecting such a thing for years, and had thought about it often enough not to care much," said Cicely to Gaston, in their after-conversation upon the subject. "I am sure I should have been quite excited."

It was somewhat unaccountable, she thought, that the news should seem to disturb Gaston so; for she was quite sure that it did disturb him. When first she revealed to him Polly's good fortune, he became quite pale, and all her enthusiasm did not rouse him to anything like brightness. It could not be that he was not glad; of course he was glad; and yet it seemed as if a shadow fell upon him at once.

"She will not act any more now," Cicely said.

"And I cannot help feeling a little sorry for her friends at the Prince's. They will miss her so."

"And we shall miss her, too," added Framleigh, almost involuntarily.

"We?" said Cicely. "She is not going away from us altogether, Gaston."

"I think we shall find that she will, in the end," he answered. "Other people will fill up her time, and she will have so many new responsibilities."

Which observation caused Cicely to burst forth, the next time she saw Polly, in a pathetic lament.

"Gaston thinks we shall lose you, now you are rich," she said. "Oh, Polly, please don't let it be true in the end. He said 'in the end.'"

"Capt. Framleigh holds as high an opinion of me as ever, I see," said Polly, caustically. "I am much obliged to him. You know it won't be true, Cicely. I care for you more than I care for any one else in the world—even more than I care for Uncle Jack, and that is saying a great deal." And when she met Framleigh, she disposed of the matter in rather a high-handed way.

"Thank you for trying to persuade Cicely that a paltry fortune would make me less fond of her," she said. "It was kind of you to try to make her distrust me. If we have never been friends, Capt. Framleigh, I thought we had not been exactly enemies. If you distrust me yourself—"

"I not trust you!" he interposed, looking so pale that he made her feel uncomfortable and half-vexed at her own injustice. "I your enemy! Nay, you know, as well as I do, that is not true."

"I thank you, again," said Polly, with haughty perversity.

Her trouble with this man was her recognition of his proud humility. Sting, or stab him, as she might, he never retorted. He bore his burden in silence, and with a patience which had disturbed her more than once. He had altered strangely, since the time when he had so roused her pride and resentment. Misfortune and humiliation had changed him. Cicely's influence had subdued him, as it were, and something, more subtly powerful still had done the rest. He was as proud as ever, it is true, but his pride was of a different order.

"I suppose I deserve this," he said to his persecutor, with a certain dignity now. "But it is not easy to bear." And noting the pain in his face, Polly was guilty of relenting, reluctantly, even once again.

Certainly, there must have been a wonderful

novelty to this young lady, in her new position. There must have seemed a sort of unreality in her sudden change of fortune, in the sudden finding herself a person of importance. Composed as she looked, she must have felt some slight excitement, during the following weeks of preparation, it must have been a trifle startling to find herself, her simple self, Pretty Polly P., of the Prince's, transacting business with lawyers, receiving visits from landlords and upholsterers, giving orders, entering into agreements, superintending arrangements, and paying bills, for the furnishing and fitting up of the new house in Blank Square, necessitated the paying of bills, whose sum total, a few months before, would have represented to her inexperienced eyes quite a little fortune.

"I want everything to be pretty," she said to Cicely, with an inconsistent sigh. "Money will buy me pretty things, if it will buy nothing else one wants."

"Nothing else one wants!" echoed Cicely. "I thought money would buy everything."

"It won't buy happiness," murmured Polly, as if half unconscious that she was speaking.

"I should think," said Cicely, "that you would have no need to buy happiness."

"Happiness, indeed?" cried Miss Polly, waking suddenly from her reverie. "Is there such a thing in the world?"

But the new establishment was very pretty. Everything it contained was pretty and tasteful, Cicely thought; and as to Teddy Popham—when Teddy made his first visit to Blank Square, and found Polly in her own artistic, grand-looking parlor, in company with Montmorenci, in a new gown of the thickest and softest black satin, and a chaste head-dress of lace, he was so completely charmed that he could scarcely contain his feelings, and so, knowing himself a privileged person, he gave vent to them.

"It is just the exact style of thing to suit you, Polly," he cried, enthusiastically. "Didn't I always tell you that swelldom was your element? It suits you, you know. You always seem too tall for little rooms, and too—too—well, statuesque, and all that sort of thing, for ordinary surroundings."

The young lady had not been enjoying her new state and pomp for many days, before she found her way back to Cicely's parlor, and having spent an evening with her friend, ended her visit with stirring up Capt. Gaston again.

"I hope, whenever Cicely comes to see me—and that must be often—you will come with her," she said, just before she went away. "I shall always like to see you." And then, coloring

warmly, and looking a little awkward as she met his eyes, she gave him her hand, for the first time since the night upon which she had so cavalierly told him that he had better remain at home.

CHAPTER XII.

"GOADED TO CONFESSION."

It really was surprising to see how Polly adapted herself to circumstances, and how impossible it was to disturb her grave self-possession. As Teddy had admiringly remarked, "swelldom" seemed to be her element, and became her. And what a success she was at Blank Square, to be sure! What an admirable mistress she made for the handsome house, and what a talent she developed for rendering all things well-ordered. She could manage even Uncle Jack, who was disposed to be a trifle more blatant and consequential than usual in his ecstasy, and even Montmorenci, who was apt to feel herself overwhelmed. And how they missed her at the Prince's, some of them even shedding tears over her, when she bade them farewell. Old Buxton himself was reported to have wept, but how far that legend is true, it would be difficult to assume. Her first entertainment at Blank Square was given to her old friends and fellow-actors, and not one of them was left out, from old Buxton to the call-boy, who adored her, and sniffed audibly when Blathers, (that celebrated tragedian) made a speech during supper, and proposed her health as "Pretty Polly P."

"For," said Blathers, with feeling, "though oceans wide should between us roll, even though she should become the per-rourd ber-ride of a deucal ke-oronet, and a de-in-dem should rest upon her be-row, Pretty Polly P. would be Pretty Polly P. to our fe-nithful hearts to the last." With which touching sentiment, he sat down in triumph, and wiped his eyes with a white handkerchief of appalling size, scornng to conceal his emotion.

Cicely was present at this entertainment, and so, of course, was Teddy Popham, who, I will remark, made himself immensely popular, as he always did; and Framleigh was there also. Polly, as hostess, was quite entrancing. She had never looked handsomer, or more statuesque in her life, than she did this night, in the simple, white muslin, with its elegant, yet unassuming trimmings of soft, web-like lace. She vied with her own carnations—the carnations she wore in her hair and at her belt—in color, her eyes shone, and every vestige of that severe air melted away. She danced with her admirers, one after the other; she found partners for all the young ladies, and whist-tables for all the older ones; and showed herself withal so tactful and bewitching a hostess, that it

was easy to comprehend why she had always been such a favorite. And among the rest she danced with Framleigh. During one of the waltzes, he caught sight of her standing a little apart from the rest, twisting a red carnation in her fingers, and looking quite as if she had forgotten herself and her guests for a moment; so he succumbed to a sudden impulse, and went to her, and wakened her from her reverie, by addressing her in the very words he had used on that eventful "evening" of Mrs. Pomphrey's.

"Will you waltz with me?" he said.

She started a little as she raised her eyes.

"Waltz?" she said, a trifle abstractedly. "Oh, I beg pardon! I forgot. Yes, I will waltz?"

He led her out among the dancers, and placed his arm around her waist.

"It is a long time since that first waltz of ours," he said, as they whirled off.

"Not so long, really," she answered. "But so many things seem to have happened since then. It was at Mrs. Pomphrey's, where I went to act. That was the first time, too, that I had the pleasure of meeting Miss Dalrymple. By-the-by, Miss Dalrymple called upon me, this morning."

She was very fond of trying to convince herself that he was to marry Miss Dalrymple. He would be sure to do so, eventually, she always insisted mentally. He was not the sort of man to throw away fortune and position for the sake of a scruple. And yet, in spite of her inward determination, he had not yet made the slightest move toward marrying Miss Dalrymple; in fact, he was even so indiscreet, as to avoid her a little, and receive fewer cups of tea from her fair hands. So, on this occasion, he did not pursue the subject of Miss Dalrymple, but began again,

"I have never before had the opportunity to congratulate you," he said. "You must let me do so now."

"Wait until I have tried being rich for a year, and then congratulate me, if I am not tired of it," she said. "Perhaps, I shall be like the hatter I once read of, who made a fortune; and then made himself ill with wishing for his work again; and at last was obliged to make hats to save his life. Perhaps I shall find I cannot live without the Prince's and the foot-lights. But," with a slight shrug of her shoulders, "with me it will be different. I shall be acting still, but on a new stage. Playing the part of first walking lady—a part I was not born to. I wonder if I shall not often find that I don't even know my cues."

Then she looked across the room, and nodded to Cicely, who was standing talking and listening sweetly to the tragic Blathers, upon every linea-

ment of whose expressive countenance the most intense admiration and reverence was written.

"Look at Cicely now," she said. "The part would come to her by nature—she would never forget her cues. Five thousand a year is what one would naturally expect Fortune to bestow upon Cicely. Why has it been given to me? Why——?" And then she stopped herself abruptly, and the fine, severe air of gravity fell upon her, all at once, like a mask. "I beg pardon," she said. "What nonsense I am talking. Is not the time of that waltz a little slow?"

Framleigh really felt that he never was seen to so poor advantage as when he was in this young lady's presence. She was fond of making difficult speeches to him, when she addressed him at all, and of making sarcastic assertions concerning herself, which common politeness commanded him to contradict, without giving him the ghost of a chance to contradict them, since she gave him the impression that she was so completely indifferent, that gallant speeches would be at once absurd and officious. It was much to be regretted that the amiability of so charming a young creature was not more above reproach.

But as I have before said, he bore it patiently, even while he felt himself at a disadvantage. Perhaps it was Cicely who led him so often to the Blank Square establishment that winter, or, perhaps, he found it hard to resist temptation. He always accompanied Cicely in his visits, however, and, accordingly, was placed in a somewhat dangerous position. Is it not a dangerous position for a man, who loves a delectable young creature, to be frequently in that delectable young creature's presence? To see her in her own household, to behold her charms, to thrill at the sound of her voice, to long to touch her hand, and praise her fresh, sweet beauty, without being permitted to do either? And this position was Gaston Framleigh's during these months. His bitter-sweet portion it was to stand and look on, while Miss Polly enacted her new *rolé* in so apt and fascinating a manner. Of course, she became popular. Of course, society confessed her power at once. The heiress to five thousand a year was not to be ignored. Besides this, did not Mrs. Grundy speedily learn that this handsome young person was really a member of a most excellent family, a Scotch Rossitur, one of the Rossiturs of Ayrshire? Indeed, the story of her life made her all the more interesting. Her mother, Miss Alison Rossitur, had been disinherited in consequence of her sad *mesalliance*; and this, her daughter, had actually supported herself, and that delightful, hospitable, old gentleman, her uncle, by her exertions upon the stage, which had, indeed,

been most highly commendable. It was quite a pretty romance. And we must all know her! "Charles, you must dance with Miss Pemberton, dear! Edgar, is it possible you have not been introduced yet? My dear Mrs. De Browne, you really must present me to the heroine of this touching little history."

It was thus society talked. And Polly was in great request consequently. She received callers; she received invitations; her programme, when she attended evening parties, was full, and pressed down, and running over.

The youngest, and most imposing Miss Fitz Robynsonne, Beatrix, the blonde, who was just "out," and had created no inconsiderable sensation before her advent, sank immediately after it into comparative insignificance. Young ladies, who had the reputation of being wits, found their stars paling before her greater brilliance. She said wittier things than any of them, and, wital, could be more severe. Her taste was unexceptionable, and alas! for them, inimitable. Some of them had secretly hoped that she would be a trifle "loud," and theatrical, but she was not. Her dress was simple elegance itself, and so were her surroundings, though she was daring enough to hold to Montmorenci and Uncle Jack more firmly than ever. And as for those who attempted to satirize the peculiarities of that excellent couple, woe betide them! Miss Polly's fine eyes flashed lightnings upon them; her fine air overawed them; her sharp, scathing wit beat them back into oblivion, and frightened them into ignominious silence. She herself was afraid of nothing, and was equal to any emergency.

"A fellow cannot help admiring her," cried Teddy Popham, enthusiastically. "She takes a man by storm. There is something in her to admire. See how she holds those young muffs at arm's length, and forces them to respect her. She did just the same thing, when she was only Pretty Polly P., at the Prince's. They dare advance no farther than they dare now. There are not many women, who can control them, in such a way.

How could it be expected otherwise than that Framleigh should admire her with the rest, should find his hidden passion growing stronger day by day, and rendering him at times very hopeless, and desperate, and discontented indeed? Even if she had looked upon him with favor—and he was sure that she did not—pride itself would have forbidden him to make advances toward her. The tables were turned in these days, and it was Pretty Polly P. whom he had once patronized with frigid condescension, who held the reins of power in her own hands. How could he dare to

sue for the favor of this handsome, high-spirited creature, upon whom he had once quite looked down? A penniless Captain of the Guards, who lived upon his pay, would be a nice match for her, forsooth! It was rather galling, too, to see these young whippersnappers dancing attendance upon her, filling up her programme, carrying her bouquet, picking up her fan, while he felt forced to stand aloof.

"Good evening, Capt. Framleigh," she would say, when he came to her to ask for a dance, (for he found himself obliged to drift back again into society, to some extent, after his friends found Cicely out.) "Good evening." And she would hold out her fair hand, with the most graceful air imaginable. "Cicely has been carried away, as usual, I see, before she has had the chance to speak to any of us. A dance? Certainly, if I have one to spare. Waltz third? Let me see—that belongs to Mr. Trelawney. And the fourth to Sir John, here. And the fifth. Ah, so sorry, but I have not a waltz left. But there is a quadrille here, towards the last, if we both remain so long. You may have that."

And he was fain to content himself, and appear grateful. But really, since the change of her fortune, Polly treated him better than she had been wont to do. His reception at Blank Square was always a kindly one, and now and then she even condescended to check herself, when she was on the point of making one of her most severe speeches. But disappointment and restless self-contempt made such a change in him, in spite of all ameliorating circumstances, that, at last, even Teddy Popham found him out.

"You are not happy, old fellow," he said to Gaston, one day. "You don't look like yourself. You are getting old before your time, and you are losing your beauty. You ought to marry, and settle down."

"Who shall I marry?" demanded the Captain, coolly.

"Why," said Teddy, cheerfully, and with amiable discretion, "there are lots of nice girls, you know. There's the Dalrymple, for instance. Why don't you take her? The old boy would come to his senses then——"

"Popham," interposed his friend, "do you think the Dalrymple would take me, if I were to offer myself?"

Teddy stared at him. He did not quite understand something in his tone.

"Well, she seems to like you," he answered. "And there is nothing like trying, you know. And it certainly would be a good thing if you could regain your old prospects."

"Even if I didn't care a copper farthing for

the Dalrymple?" commented Framleigh. "So it would."

"Well—no," hesitated Teddy. "I didn't mean that, of course. I was taking it for granted that you would learn to care for her. She—she's confounded handsome, you see!" in an embarrassed burst.

"I should not care the copper farthing for her if she was ten times as handsome as she is," said Framleigh, and then, all at once, the truth blurted out in spite of him. "There is only one woman on earth to me," he said, bitterly.

Teddy could hardly believe his ears. What! had it come to that?

"Only one woman on earth!" he said. "I don't understand. I hadn't thought of that." And then, a sudden thought startling him, he began to falter, and stare at his friend, more amazed than ever.

"There!—there's only one woman it *could* be, if it is not Diana Dalrymple," he said. "And yet I cannot believe——"

"You may go on," said Framleigh, flinging out his words quite irritably. "You are going to guess aright, but I should have thought you might have seen. I thought I had been fool enough to betray it, long ago."

"It isn't—no, it isn't," said Teddy. "Look here, Framleigh, it can't be Polly P."

"Isn't, and can't be," repeated Framleigh. "But it *is*, I tell you, and it is no other; and you may write me down an ass, for my pains."

CHAPTER XIII.

"A PIECE OF ADVICE."

WHEN Teddy heard these words, he shook his head dubiously.

"Well," he said, "I must confess, it looks pretty bad. She has always been so down on you, somehow or other, you see."

"Down on me!" cried his friend, laughing outright. "Down on me? I should think she was. And 'down on me' is the only happy expression which seems to convey the idea. Thank you, my boy." And he dragged at his moustache with quite a ferocious air.

He looked so savagely wretched over it, that Teddy felt impelled to offer an attempt at comfort. "But then you know," he suggested, rather feebly, "that is not such a bad sign, in some women. I have heard fellows say that it wasn't a bad sign at all; and perhaps it isn't; but—but," with reluctance, "it is rather awkward that—well, that you didn't seem to like her more—at first——"

"Rather," returned Framleigh, laconically.

and then his savage air came back upon him, and he turned upon his friend abruptly. "You don't suppose I am such a fool as to think of ever asking her to marry me now, do you?" he demanded.

"It will be rather hard on you, if you don't!" said Teddy.

Framleigh quite glared. Hard on him! The thought of it almost drove him mad. Just to think of standing by, and watching some rascal carry her off. Every man, who might chance to rival him, was a "rascal," in his present frame of mind.

"And," added Teddy, "whatever you may think now about not asking her to marry you, I am afraid you will find it harder to face than you fancy. It will get the better of you, some day, fight against it as you may; it will, I tell you. I have been through all that myself, you see; so I know. The fact is, there is only one thing could save you from it."

"And that?" said Framleigh.

"Oh, that is not to be thought of. It is going away somewhere—somewhere far enough off to make sudden coming back the next thing to impossible—exchanging to India, or something of that kind."

Framleigh rose, and began to pace the floor, restlessly.

"And why is such a thing not to be thought of?" he demanded. "It is the best thing, after all, and, to tell the truth, I have thought of it often enough before in secret. I cannot stand this. And what you say is true. If I try to stand it, I shall make an idiot of myself before I know what I am doing. Why isn't it to be thought of? It is to be thought of. It—"

"It will be rather hard on Cicely," put in Teddy, gravely.

Framleigh paused. Twelve months ago, he would soon have disposed of Cicely; but now he did not find it so easy. It would be rather hard upon her, to be sure, to be sent back to the barrenness of "Bareacres," without so much as "by your leave." So, thinking of Cicely, he turned round to Teddy, his fire toned down into haggard weariness.

"No," he said. "It would not do, I see. I forgot about Cicely." And there, for the time being, the matter ended.

Among the many excellent and discerning people, who had begun to take a polite interest in Miss Polly, Diana Dalrymple ranked foremost. The romantic little history had quite touched her heart, it seemed. She told it to her friends, and related it to her masculine admirers, with quite a grace, when she sat at the marble-topped table, dispensing nectar. Effusive, after the manner of

ordinary mortals, Miss Dalrymple could never be, but certainly she was very polite to Polly, in a ceremonious style. She had called upon her, at an early day, carrying her mamma with her, and touching graciously upon their former acquaintance, and after the first call, she had managed the rest with her usual admirable tact. Indeed, her coolly-satisfied suavity inspired Framleigh to indulge in a sarcasm more than once.

"You find Miss Pemberton a very charming friend?" he said to her one evening.

She went on with her tating, serenely, as she answered him, with the manner of the stately of misconstrued goddesses.

"If you intend to be sarcastic, Gaston," she said, "I must submit of course. Pardon me for saying that I do find Miss Pemberton more agreeable than I anticipated."

"It is astonishing how many people have made the same discovery of late," said Framleigh.

"One may be deceived," returned Miss Dalrymple, with fine self-satisfaction. "If one has made a mistake, it is but just to acknowledge it." And she went on with her work composedly.

"My dear Diana," said Framleigh. "You will never make a mistake."

After awhile, however, he began to see that Polly rather encouraged the intimacy, and he was anything but comfortable. He never accepted an invitation to Blank Square without being sure of encountering Diana, and he never encountered her without being mystified by Polly's manner.

Polly managed, in her character as hostess, to throw them together, and leave them together. She managed to place Framleigh at his cousin's side, whenever there was an opportunity, and sometimes she even made opportunities. He could not understand it at all, at first; but when the truth did begin to dawn upon him, he was stung to the core. She was playing the part of a graciously indifferent friend to him. She took just enough cool interest in his fortunes to take an outsider's plan to retrieve them. She knew that if he married Diana, the pomps and luxuries of Gaston Court would be his again; and so she thought he had better marry Diana, and she threw her into his path accordingly. Pleasant this, truly—pleasant, indeed! He almost made up his mind to remain at home; but, after raging inwardly for a week or so in solitude, he found he could not, and so gave way.

And when he made his next visit, the climax was reached. Diana was not there, but Polly was alone, and in a strange mood. She was cold and warm by turns, for an hour, and talked much feverish nonsense, and, indeed, was so eri-

dently uncertain of herself, that he felt something was going to happen. And something did. She led him into an artful conversation, talked to him about Cicely, and about "Bareacres," and, at last, led him to Gaston Court, and, having betrayed him into displaying something of warmth in describing its venerable beauties, fell upon him suddenly.

"It is a great pity that you should lose it," she said.

She was sitting upon an ottoman, holding a pretty screen of flamingo feathers between herself and the fire; and when he turned to see what the unexpected ring of suggestion in her voice meant, he saw that her color was brighter than the blaze need have made it.

"You said once," he answered her, "that in my place you would accept almost any alternative—"

"I said 'any, not 'almost any,'" commented Polly, coolly.

"And you know," he persisted, "what alternative it has been left me to accept. Yes, I know you do."

"I suppose I may as well admit that I do," answered Polly.

"Thank you," he said, his blood rising to a white heat.

Polly began to wave her flamingo feathers, with a very unreadable expression in her eyes. She even frowned a little, and looked slightly severe.

"Why should it be so hard?" she said. "Why should it seem so dreadful an alternative, to marry a beautiful woman whom everybody admires? I do not see why, I must confess."

He was so heated and unsteady, and in so desperate a frame of mind, that he was actually imprudent enough to rise from his chair, and go toward her.

"Shall I tell you why?" he demanded. "Shall I tell you why?"

She was obliged to drop her screen, and pick it up, and look at him with as cold and politely-interested a face as she could summon up. It would have been stupidity itself to try to avoid his glance.

"Yes," she said. "N-no. Yes—No." And then, all at once, at the sound of the door-handle turning, she rose to her feet. "Good evening, Mr. Trelawny," she said, with extreme graciousness. And, to add to the pleasantness of his position, Framleigh found himself glaring at that most innocent young swell, with whom he stood almost face to face.

Awkward as it was, at the time, he was not sorry afterward that fate had so interposed, had

interposed to save him from betraying himself, as he had certainly been on the point of doing.

The incident had proved that Teddy was right. It would be the next thing to impossible to keep within bounds. And was it not imperative that he should control himself? What an indifference was this, which could give him such advice as she had given him? She had never been kind to him, since their misunderstanding; she had often been haughty and severe; but this was cruel. Yes, cruelty itself, since she could not have been so blind as not to see the truth. The fact was, Capt. Gaston knew less of Miss Polly than her most distant acquaintance did, or, at least, he knew as little. He knew only that he had learned to love her, and that he was sure she regarded him with contempt, and both pride and love suffered so keenly through this knowledge, that even his worst enemy might have pitied him. How tired he was of those informal winter-evening visits, before the spring came; and yet how impossible he found it to forego them altogether. He was more pallid and worn, by the end of the winter, than the most dissipated belle of the season. Cicely began to be quite anxious about him, and Teddy Popham, when spoken to upon the subject, shook his head gravely and mysteriously; and even Polly at last condescended to observe to her friend, that Capt. Framleigh looked ill, and surely needed change of air.

And at last, though quite through a trick of chance, he got change of air. There came to him one morning, at breakfast, a letter from Gaston Court, containing unexpected and exciting news. Mr. Gaston was ill—an apoplectic attack—and wished to see him at once. His lawyer wrote the letter, and intimated that there was a probability of a fatal termination to the illness. Certainly Framleigh's heart beat rather spasmodically, as he read this epistle. It might mean a great deal, and it must mean something, though he was by no means so sanguine as Cicely, who believed that it meant nothing else than that her idol was to be taken wholly into favor again.

"You must go at once," cried this mercenary young creature. "I will run and pack your valise, while you finish your breakfast. I can stay at Blank Square, Gaston, while you are away. Polly has often asked me, and I always refused, because I could not bear to leave you alone." And she positively did run away, after pouring him out a second cup of coffee, leaving her own untouched, that there might not be a moment's unnecessary delay. But when she came out of the bed-room, she was looking more

sober, and, indeed, was quite in a repentant mood.

"I'm afraid I—I am rather wicked and selfish," she said, naively. "I am afraid I was not sorry for Mr. Gaston at all. I could not help feeling so glad that he was going to do you justice. He must be very lonely, poor old man, dying all alone. How cruel I was to be so mercenary, and think only of his money." And she looked quite tearful over her own innocent iniquity.

One can readily imagine how she confided in her friend, when she reached Blank Square, and how the two sat together, before the drawing-room fire, with their worsted work, and discussed the matter, though, taking all things into consideration, Miss Polly said very little, though she listened very well.

"I thought, when he paid the debts, that he must be softening a little," said Cicely, "for, of course, it was he who paid them, though he did act so strangely afterward, and refuse to acknowledge doing it, even when Gaston wrote to thank him. You know no one else could have paid them, Polly. There *was* no one else, in fact."

"Of course there was no one else," commented Miss Polly. "No one else who could have taken sufficient interest in him."

"No one in the world," agreed Cicely, spreading her work out on her knee, and regarding it critically. And then she went on to enlarge on the various incidents which proved the person who paid the debts to have been Mr. Gaston, and no one else, and also to descant on the many perfections of the beloved one, and his many generousities to her unworthy self, and was so prettily grateful, and innocently in earnest, that Polly looked at her askant, from under her long, black lashes, and asked herself sternly how it happened that she herself was not so tender and loving.

CHAPTER XIV.

"HE IS A GENTLEMAN,"

ALL that week, Cicely remained at Blank Square, and part of the next, receiving, in the meantime, only one brief, hurried note from her brother. Mr. Gaston was in great danger, and the end might come at any moment. He was very irritable, Framleigh wrote, very exacting, and not much altered. He had learned something, very singular, which he would tell Cicely on his return; and as for the rest, he did not appear at all sanguine as to the result of his visit. But his note was very affectionate, and so very satisfactory to the recipient, who, of course, showed it to Polly.

On the following Thursday, however, the absentee returned, and coming to Blank Square, was enthusiastically received by Cicely, who was sitting alone in the drawing-room, waiting for Polly and Montmorenci, who had gone out.

"At last!" she cried, when he came in. "How glad I am, dear. But you are paler than ever, Gaston, and look quite worn out. Sit down and rest, and tell me about it when you feel less tired. Ah! Gaston—" faltering suddenly, as she met his haggard eyes. "You have bad news."

He made a very poor attempt to smile.

"It is not good news," he said. "You know I was hardly sanguine about it. It is all over, Cicely, as far as my hopes are concerned. We need cling to shadows no longer."

The tears rushed to Cicely's eyes, in spite of her efforts.

"Is—is he dead?" she ventured.

"No," was the answer. "Not yet. That is the worst. We have quarreled again, Cicely; or, rather, I think I may say, I have displeased Mr. Gaston again, since the anger was on his side, and not on mine."

"How did it happen?" she asked, in a dropped voice, the tears falling over her cheeks, as she looked at the fire, and thought how dull the future appeared, and how hard it would be for her hero to bear it. Ah, how cruel fate had been to him!

He hesitated a moment, before he answered her. It was, upon the whole, rather a delicate and difficult query to reply to.

"It was the old condition we disagreed about," he said, somewhat awkwardly. "I could not accept the alternative he offered."

"The alternative!" exclaimed Cicely. "Gaston!"

"The alternative was Diana Dalrymple," he returned, quite flushing.

"He wanted you to marry her!"

Gaston bent his head.

She put out her loving hand, and caught his, in a tender pressure.

"And you did not think you could care enough," she cried. "And were too generous to ask her to be your wife, unless you could—even for the sake of gaining Gaston Court, and all that money. Oh, Gaston! how proud I am of you! What other man would have been so honorable and generous?"

She spoke in innocent, admiring ecstasy. And, indeed, she believed, quite sincerely, that no other man could have been; and that this faulty brother of hers had no peer on earth.

Perhaps it was this very *naiveté* of hers which

won from Framleigh the confession which he had so unexpectedly made to Teddy Popham. She was so fond of him, and always so grateful for his confidences, and again he felt so worn out with his conflict. "Why should he not tell her his secret?" he said to himself. So, in a moment more, it was revealed.

"If I had married Diana Dalrymple," he said, wondering if she would understand him. "If I had married Diana Dalrymple, I should have lost more than Gaston Court—I should have lost the right to love the woman, who is more to me than a score of such fortunes could be."

She understood him in an instant, though, since that night when he had first mentioned Polly, she had been often baffled and mystified.

"And that woman is Polly!" she cried out, piteously, because she felt his case to be so hopeless a one. "It is Polly, for whom you have sacrificed all your hopes; and Polly is the only person who is severe and unjust toward you!"

"Which proves me to have been disinterested," he answered, with a still weaker attempt at a smile! "Yes, Cicely, it is Polly, and I have thrown away the substance for her shadow's sake."

There was a silence then, in which Cicely cried softly over him, holding his hand, and admiring him, and wondering in secret how it was possible that Polly could be so blind and stony of heart; so blind as not to see; so stony-hearted as to be able to resist so many perfections and glorious attributes. It was Framleigh who ended the pause.

"But the strangest part of the story is yet to come," he said. "I had almost forgotten to tell you. Mr. Gaston denies all knowledge of the debts having been paid. He declared, almost indignantly, that he had had nothing whatever to do with the matter, and had returned my letter unopened, because he did not choose to engage in a correspondence."

Cicely regarded him in utter amazement.

"But who could have done it, if he did not?" she exclaimed. "There is no one else. Polly and I only said so the other day. Are you sure that he meant what he said?"

"I am quite sure," was the answer. "He was sufficiently in earnest to be quite irritable at the idea of my fancying that he had been guilty of such a weakness, as he evidently considered it. It was not Mr. Gaston, whoever else it may have been."

There was the end of Cicely's building of fair castles. They fell into the dust now in good sooth; and they buried all her high hopes with them.

When her brother left her, as he did before Polly returned, she went back to her place by the fire, and cried over the fading of her dreams, most piteously. Oh, how dreadful it all was, indeed! And "poor Gaston—poor fellow!" The tears running over her pretty cheeks, at such a rate, that her nice, little handkerchief was quite damp.

Everybody was cruel and unjust to him; even Polly, who was so kind to other people, and for whom he had so nobly sacrificed all. She almost felt as if she had no right to love Polly so much herself, though how she was to help it she could not tell. Was it possible that Polly could let things go on in this way still, and in the end could be so adamant of soul as to marry somebody else? Oh, it must not be! It could not be! Could she not say something to Polly, which, without actually betraying Gaston, would make her friend see the truth—just guess at it? Poor Gaston indeed! Ah, she knew very well how it was. If Polly had been poor, it would have been different; but he was too proud to speak now, when this horrible money stood between them.

And she wept afresh, and even worked herself into an inconsistent little fever of half conscience-stricken anger against Polly; and when that young lady came in from her shopping tour, Cicely rather surprised her with her dampness of appearance, and the tearful flush on her soft cheeks.

"It is all at an end," she said, the minute Polly sat down. "He has come back."

Polly started, but managed to recover herself.

"He?" she said. "Oh, you mean your brother. Has he, indeed? And Mr. Gaston? He is dead, I suppose."

Cicely shook her head.

"No," she answered. "He was not when Gaston left him, though the doctors said he could not recover. He quarreled with Gaston again, and would not even let him stay, he was so angry."

"He must be an amiable old gentleman," commented Polly, irreverently. "What was it all about, Cicely?"

Cicely's eyes fixed themselves on the grate, and she began to play with her handkerchief, nervously. She did not look at Polly.

"He wanted him to—to marry—Diana Dalrymple," she said, with a tremor in her grave voice.

Polly started, that time, and did not recover herself, though she made a creditable effort, as soon as the traitorous start was over.

"Well," she said, "that was easy enough, wasn't it? Why didn't he promise to do it?"

The tears were so near the surface, that Cicely's eyes began to fill, and her lip commenced to quiver.

"Because he—is too—too honorable," she faltered.

Polly glanced at her, uneasily.

"Why should he be?" she asked. "Diana would accept him, at any minute. And whatever I may have said about it, of course, I know that she would," with some fine disdain.

Perhaps it was this fine disdain which made Cicely's emotion get the better of her. She raised her head, and looked her friend full in the face, curving her slender neck prettily.

"He is a gentleman," she said. "And," but here her momentary courage failed her. "And he cares for some one else," she added, a pathetic little sob catching her up, and quite altering her tone.

Polly turned absolutely pale. She was in as excitable a frame of mind as Cicely, with her starts, and flushes, and pallor.

"Then," she demanded, loftily, "why doesn't he marry the somebody else?"

Why she should have been so lofty, it would have been hard to say, unless for the rather foolish reason that she always was lofty, when she spoke of Capt. Framleigh.

"It is because he is a gentleman that he cannot," cried Cicely, in a little burst of feeling and anger against Polly's coldness, commingled. "It is because he is poor, and because he is honorable. He has not even asked her, and he never will, for she is more fortunate than he is. And—and there are circumstances under which a gentleman cannot speak with honor, and so he must suffer in silence, as my poor darling will." And she laid her sweet face down, and sobbed aloud.

But, strange to say, Polly was not outwardly moved, even by this, which would have touched her inexpressibly, under some circumstances. She seemed to have turned quite cold and still, and her great, dark, gray eyes were lighted with a curious, steady fire.

"Ah," she said, "I see now. He is too proud to speak. He is more proud than loving. He must save his pride if he loses his love. And this woman whom he pretends to love—why, he has no thought for her. He does not care for her enough to see that she might suffer too. All the pain must be on his side, forsooth; all the sacrifice—everything. He does not see that she may bear her part, and if she does—what of that? The Framleigh pride is safe, and what does it matter for the rest? 'A gentleman!' 'too honorable!' 'too poor!' It is too proud, I tell you,

too selfish, and too cold." And before her bewildered young friend had time to reply to her in a word of defence, indeed could do more than gasp for breath, and stare at her lovely, haughty, impassioned face, this disdainful and extraordinary young woman turned about, and walked grandly out of the room with the air and demeanor of a tragedy-queen in a play.

CHAPTER XV.

"IT WAS PRETTY POLLY."

AND while all this was going on, the subject under discussion was paying a visit to Teddy Popham.

Teddy greeted his friend with effusion. It was a good-natured habit of his to greet all his friends with effusion; but Framleigh, being his Damon, received a warmer welcome than all the rest. He met that gentleman with open arms, so to speak; sprang out of his arm-chair, when his name was announced; tossed his book across the room, and advanced to receive him, amid a cloud of cigar-smoke.

"No end of glad to see you, old fellow," he cried, shaking his hand stormily. "I am, really. Come in, have a seat, and a weed. Some first-class weeds here. Now tell us the news. You know whether it has all come right or not, and whether the old boy has done the straightforward thing. But of course he has—of course: he could do nothing else."

Framleigh threw himself into a chair, and took a cigar.

"Thanks," he interposed. "Much obliged. But don't congratulate yet, young man. Control your transports. Here's the news. You can have it in three words—I'm a beggar."

And then, as soon as Teddy's excitement had abated, he told his story, just as he had told it to Cicely.

There was no denying that Teddy looked uneasy under it. He fidgeted, and puffed, and listened, and listened, and fidgeted, and puffed, and when it was all over, he broke out, looking positively guilty.

"Well," he said, "it's a bad look-out, and no mistake. But—but, when I come to think of the matter coolly, I never quite saw his drift in paying these bills in that queer way."

"My dear fellow," said Framleigh, "he never paid them."

Teddy almost jumped out of his seat, and then he flushed nervously.

"Never paid them?" he repeated. "He didn't? Never paid them? Then—then, who did?"

"That is what I want to know," remarked

Framleigh, looking at him, questioningly. "That is what I came here to ask."

He saw then that the idea which had taken root in his mind, within the last few hours, was not without foundation; for Teddy flinched so visibly at this, that his ignorance showed itself the poorest pretence in the world.

"But why——" he began.

"Because," interrupted Framleigh, "you can tell me. You know—no one better. Come, own up, my generous old fellow." And he rose, and came to the easy-chair, with outstretched hand. "It is useless to try to hide it. You did it yourself."

But this was worse than ever. Teddy jumped up, this time excitedly, in most emphatic dissent.

"No, no," he cried, "I didn't, on honor, Framleigh—I didn't. You never made a greater blunder in your life; though I was willing enough, the Lord knows. I hadn't the money, you know. I wouldn't take the credit of it, for all I own."

Framleigh stared at him, surprised.

"Then who did?" he burst forth, a trifle irritably. "For pity's sake tell me. You know, I see."

"I daren't tell you," protested Teddy. "It's a secret, and I only found it out by the merest accident, and I oughtn't to say a word about it. If I did," despairingly, "she would never forgive me. You know, yourself, she has got the deuce of a temper, when she's soured."

"She?" exclaimed Framleigh, turning pale, and falling back apace. "She! Who is she?"

"She?" stammered the badgered Teddy, wildly. "Did I say she? Oh, the deuce! It's all out, then. But, it's too bad, Framleigh; it is, I declare!"

Framleigh was as pale as his friend was flushed.

"Popham," he said, "you must tell me, I insist."

So Teddy gave it up.

"I suppose I must," he answered, driven into a most desperate corner. "I as good as told you, when I said 'she,' like a fool. I couldn't take that back, you know. It was Pretty Polly P."

That was enough. Framleigh fairly staggered. He had fancied that he had become almost hardened to the blows Fortune had aimed at his pride with such pertinacity of late. But here was a blow he had not looked for. He was so strongly agitated, that Teddy's pity began to be touched with alarm.

"Sit down, Framleigh," he said. "You look quite queer, old fellow. I did not think you would be so badly hit as this."

But he was more "badly hit" than even Teddy thought. When he sat down, he uttered something like a groan.

"And so I owe all this to her!" he said. "Though why I should, what impulse prompted her, I cannot understand. There are few women who would have been generous enough to do such a thing, so delicately, God knows; but then there are few women like her!" And then he broke out almost fiercely. "What does it mean?" he demanded. "Why did she do it?"

Teddy shook his head gravely.

"Women are hard to understand, and it is harder to keep up with Polly than with the rest of them," he said.

"There is only one motive she could have had," said Framleigh. "She did it for Cicely's sake. She is very fond of Cicely."

But Teddy did not receive this view of the case as unreservedly as might have been expected of him. He knocked the ashes from the end of his cigar, with a reflective air, and shook his head again.

"Yes," he admitted. "It's true she's fond of Cicely; but—— Well, as I said before, Polly's hard to understand."

He was very reluctant to explain how he had gained his information; but Framleigh gathered something of the truth by degrees.

"You see," he said, "I found out, by chance, that this money of hers came into her possession, some weeks before we heard anything about it, and I could not help wondering why she had kept it so quiet. I was sure she must have had a motive, and then several things I had noticed at the time flashed across my mind, and I began to compare dates, and then one day, when I called, I found her lawyer with her, and as I entered the room I caught a few hurried last words. Your name, and then something about Burroughs, and then Polly saying, in her most authoritative style, 'He must think it was Mr. Gaston.' And so I was sure, and naturally couldn't keep my face straight, when you said you had discovered that he had nothing to do with it."

There was a silence of a few minutes, in which Framleigh's face set itself into new lines of haggardness; but at length he rose from his chair, almost mechanically.

"It was for Cicely's sake she did it," he said. And then he turned to Teddy, anxiously. "You will let me thank her?" he added. "I can do so without betraying you. You must let me speak, Popham. It would be cruel to demand utter silence of me now," flushing violently. "I could not bear it."

"Well," said Teddy, driven to his wits end,

but ready to sacrifice himself, with his usual generosity, rather than sacrifice his friend, "if there is no other way out of it, I suppose I must submit; but try and spare me as much as possible."

"She shall never hear your name in connection with the subject," was the answer. "Thanks!"

"What!" exclaimed Teddy. "You are not going to her now." For Framleigh had taken his hat.

"Yes, now. I am not in the mood to wait."

So he went, and though, in his miserable excitement, he was almost unconscious of existence, he found his way back to Blank Square, startling the footman with his haggard face, and, asking for Miss Pemberton, was shown up stairs into the drawing-room, where Polly was standing by the mantel-piece, looking down at Cicely, who was seated upon her ottoman, on the hearth.

Both turned round, when his name was announced, and Cicely got up, looking at him, wondering. Really, there was something to wonder at, both in his face and in his manner. Polly would have given him a most stately greeting, but he would have none of it. He passed the stateliness by, and spoke out upon the subject of his errand at once.

"I have come," he said, "to thank you for your generosity."

It was useless to adopt an air of proud surprise. She saw that she had been betrayed, but though she became first red, and then white, she would not acknowledge that she understood, at first.

"My generosity!" she exclaimed. "I was not aware——"

"Gaston!" cried Cicely. "What has she done?"

"She has made me her debtor," he answered. "And, as it was done for your sake, Cicely; you must thank her too. It was she who paid the money we fancied had come from Mr. Gaston."

"Oh, Polly!" said Cicely. "Oh, Polly, dear!" She flew to her, and hung round her neck, with one slender arm caressing her, with tears of ecstasy and gratitude.

So Polly was fain to submit. The tears started to her eyes, too, as they would have started to the eyes of any affectionate young person, whose fate it was to be cried over sweetly by the friend she loved. And yet she endeavored to sustain her character as a stony-hearted young woman.

"I do not know where you can have learned this," she said to Framleigh. "You will, at least, give me credit," grandly, "for having intended it to be a secret."

"I learned it, by chance," he answered. "You

have not been betrayed by any one in whom you have placed confidence. I only made the discovery a few minutes ago."

"And we never thought of you," said Cicely. "You always seemed to dislike Gaston so much, you know, dear."

Framleigh's eyes met the handsome, dark, gray ones, and Polly flushed to her forehead. Then, overcome by some generous impulse, she held out her hand, and let him take it.

"Perhaps I was not exactly just," she admitted, with the manner of the most charming of queens, deigning to make terms. "I thought I had cause to dislike him, and it is not easy for me to forgive; but—but I do not think I disliked him as much as I seemed to."

Cicely could bear it no longer. She lifted her face from her friend's shoulder, and looked at her brother.

"Gaston," she said, trembling all over, "if you would only tell her the truth. She will listen, I am sure. Oh, she must have seen—she must know. I should have known, long ago, if I had been in her place; and I am not nearly so clever as she is. Polly, you will listen, won't you. Oh, Polly!" The words bursting from her in an uncontrollable little passion of sympathy and love for them both. "It was for you he gave up Gaston Court—it is you he loves!" And the moment the words had left her lips, she flew out of the room like a frightened fawn.

Truly it was a difficult position. Polly had never confronted so difficult a one, even upon the stage, in the old theatrical days. For one silent moment each looked at the other, and then Framleigh spoke, tremulously, but with proud humility.

"You must forgive her," he said. "You must forgive me!"

But the climax was reached, and even Miss Polly must be carried away by the prevailing excitement. Her scornful eyes forgot to be scornful, her slight figure forgot its disdain, her eyes sparkled with a strange touch of emotion.

"Then it is true?" she demanded. "You gave up Gaston Court and all your hopes for me?"

He bowed his head; and oh me! how she was cut to the heart, all at once, by the grave, yet hopeless dignity of his gesture! Was this the tranquil, languid, frigid "swell," whose air of the *grande seigneur* had so angered her long ago?

"And yet," she faltered, trying to hold her own, and front him bravely, and yet feeling that she quivered in every nerve, "and yet, while you could give up all this for me, you are too—too proud. Yes, too proud to—to be open with me!"

"What?" he cried. "Nay, be just to me. Have I the right to speak? Have I——"

"You have not spoken yet," she said, forgetting herself.

"I knew that I had incurred your displeasure," he said. "I thought that I had won your dislike and distrust. I have nothing to offer you but my love, though God knows that is strong enough to have almost driven me mad with despair! I am not worthy of you——!"

"You have given up all the world offered you, for my sake," she interposed. "I have been hard and unjust toward you; I would not own to myself that I had forgiven you; but I——"

And just as suddenly as she had done everything else, she turned round, and laying her face upon the hand, with which she had held to the mantel-piece, she ended in impetuous tears.

It was not for Cicely's sake that she had paid the money, she acknowledged afterward. It was because she had cared more for him than she would have confessed to herself, and in her secret heart she dreaded that he would go away and be quite lost to her. She had cared for him even while she had been most severe and contemptuous. She (but it was long before she confessed this,) had even cared for him, a little, when she had prohibited his visits at the little house; and it was because she had found herself beginning to care for him a little that she had done so. All her satirical speeches and scornful stings had been nothing but the result of her own anger at her own weakness. And really this must have been true, because, immediately after that interview, in which she had so seriously betrayed

herself, it was observed by Teddy Popham that she was as sweet-tempered and serenely-natured as she had ever been, even in the days of Pretty Polly P. and the Prince's.

But the oddest part of the *denouement* was that connected with the Gaston property. Perhaps Mr. Gaston relented, or perhaps he had been careless, and had neglected arranging his affairs until it was too late; but, however that might have been, by some trick of fortune, our hero's sacrifice turned out to have been superfluous, for, in less than a week after his engagement, he received a legal letter, which stated that as Mr. Gaston, of Gaston Court, had died without a will, the property would of course fall to the next male heir, Gaston Framleigh himself.

Immediately after her cousin's marriage, Diana Dalrymple's engagement was announced. She made a good match, and is the handsomest of matrons. But she was not fond of the Framleighs, and found herself obliged to refuse the invitation to Cicely's marriage with the honorable Teddy, which occurred a few months after the Captain's.

"They are distant relations," she was wont to say, composedly, to her friends, "but we don't know much of each other. Gaston was very wild—got into debt, you know, and all that sort of thing; and was even disinherited by old Mr. Gaston of the Court, though he managed to get the property afterward, through his uncle's dying without a will. He knew a great many disreputable people, too, and made a shockingly low marriage—a girl off the boards, you know, a dancer, or something. The men actually used to call her "PRETTY POLLY P."

PLAYING AT CROQUET

BY MRS. G. W. WHITE.

We had an introduction,
I scarce remember how;
She swept a graceful curtsy,
I made my lowest bow;
Twas on the lawn it happened,
We stood, a party gay,
With mallets duly waiting,
All ready for "Croquet."

A shower of silken ringlets,
Like golden sunbeams fell,
Around her form of beauty,
And wove a magic spell.
Her eyes were of the azure,
That marks a summer day,
My heart she quickly captured,
While playing at "Croquet."

At picnics, hops, and parties,
As oft it chanced we met,
I still got more entangled,
In love's bewildering net;
For hearts, like balls, are sometimes
Hit, when they're not "in play;"
And many a hope has vanished,
When beaten at "Croquet."

At last I dared to ask her,
If she would change her name,
The witch, she flashed for answer,
"If you can win the game!"
And when my pet was vanquished,
I kissed a tear away;
And that was how I won her,
While playing at "Croquet."